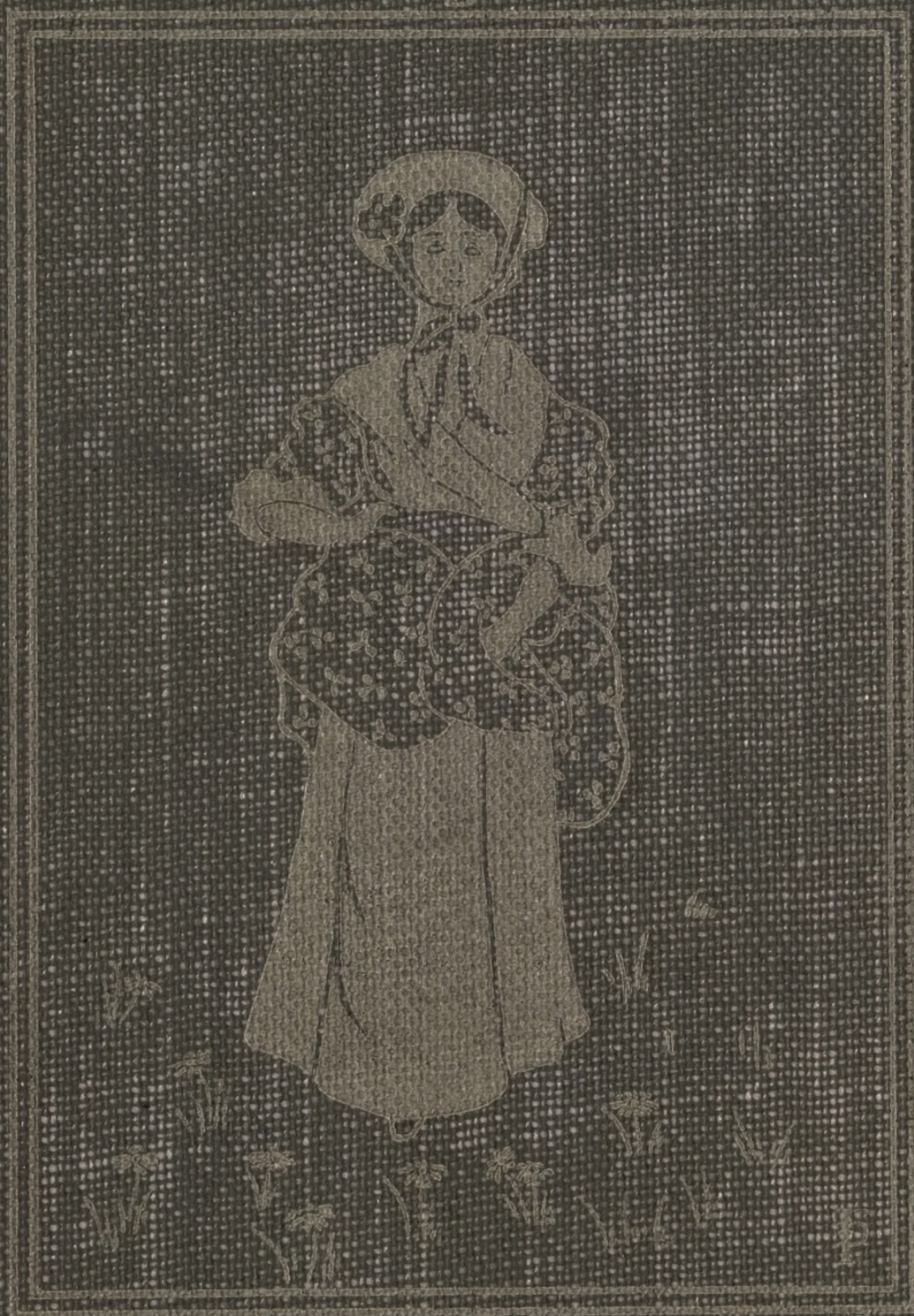


Her Very Best



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HER VERY BEST

BY AMY E. BLANCHARD



TWO GIRLS GIRLS TOGETHER
BETTY OF WYE

Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.00 per volume

THREE PRETTY MAIDS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALICE BARBER
STEPHENS

AN INDEPENDENT DAUGHTER

MISS VANITY

Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.25 per volume



Here was the great city full of mystery ; full of life

HER VERY BEST

BY

AMY E. BLANCHARD

AUTHOR OF "MISS VANITY," "BETTY OF WYE,"
"AN INDEPENDENT DAUGHTER," "TWO GIRLS," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

MARGARET F. WINNER



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HER VERY BEST



PART I

CHAPTER I

A LIGHT IN THE SKY

IT was very quiet on the front porch where Barbara Palmer sat looking out upon the blue Potomac. The borer bees were sleepily droning about the rafters, and one might hear the far-off sound of a rooster crowing, or the rustle of the wind in the trees overhead, where there were two squirrels frisking, so confident of seclusion that their quick chatter was easily distinguishable; but there was no other sound until, presently, from the house came the sweetly sonorous tones of a violoncello, and then Barbara stirred from the corner where she had been sitting and arose to her feet with a sigh.

She was a girl of about fifteen, with hazel eyes, and ruddy auburn locks which curled in little rings about a white forehead. She was small for her age, and the rusty black gown, which brought out the color of her hair, made her figure appear even more slight than it was. "Oh, dear!" she sighed; "there is nothing to

do but to get Fancy and go for a gallop. I wonder where Roger is. If he isn't in one of his difficult moods perhaps he will go with me. Helen, have you seen Roger?" she asked, as a little girl about seven years old came around the corner of the house carrying something carefully in a battered old hat.

The child looked up. "I saw him go down into the orchard a while ago," she replied. "Oh, Bab, I have a dear little duck that hasn't any mother. I am going to show it to grandpa. See, isn't it soft and fuzzy?"

"You'd better not disturb grandpa," Barbara returned. "He is deep in the first movement, and you know he is good for an hour."

Helen sat down on the step and put her duckling on the ground. "How it totters," she said. "It reminds me of old Aunt Dibby; she walks just that way."

"Give me ducky to hold, and go ask Roger if he doesn't want to take a ride," said Barbara. "Grandpa is not going to stop for one while, now that he has begun on that sonata, and we might as well have a scamper. I like music, but a steady diet of the fourth sonata does get monotonous; but then it's pretty monotonous here anyhow."

"I don't think so," said Helen. "Why, Bab, every day there is something exciting. This morning Mrs. Ducky Daddles died and left her little ducky an orphan, and yesterday Speckle hatched out thirteen chicks. Then, sometimes, I go down to Mrs. Haynes's when the butter doesn't come, and it's very exciting."

Barbara laughed. "Yes, and sometimes grandpa breaks a string of his 'cello, and that is exciting for him; and sometimes Roger gets a mood, and then it

is exciting for me. So it's pretty lively after all, isn't it, Nell?"

"Roger hasn't a mood to-day. He hasn't once called the house a miserable old rat-trap."

"Oh, he does that on rainy days when he can't get out of doors. I'm very fond of the old brown shell myself, and grandpa thinks there never was such a place. How plainly we can see Sugar Loaf to-day. It will be fine for a canter. Run along, Nell. I'll get on my skirt. Here, you'd better take ducky with you; perhaps she will enjoy the walk." And Helen's stout little legs twinkled across the lawn toward the orchard as Barbara went in-doors.

Meanwhile, the strains of the 'cello rose and fell upon the air, and as Barbara passed the door of the library she peeped in to see a tall, spare old gentleman, with mild blue eyes, a bald head, and a clean-shaven face, with his music before him. "Anything you want at the village, grandpa?" Barbara asked as he paused in his occupation. "Roger and I are going for the mail,—at least I am, whether Roger does or not."

The old gentleman smiled pleasantly. "No, daughter, I think there is nothing I want," he said. And Barbara's head disappeared.

"Dear old grandpa," she said to herself; "he never does want anything but his 'cello and his manuscript music; and Roger wants everything, 'the earth and the fulness thereof.' I'd like a few things myself, but I'm not going to complain; only sometimes I wonder if we shall all keep on living here till we drop off, one after another, like leaves from a tree. Heigho! what's the use of thinking about it?" And a few moments

after Barbara appeared again upon the porch, having donned her riding-skirt and set a little cap upon her head.

She found that Helen had returned from the orchard. "Roger is going," said the little girl to her sister. "He has gone to get the horses. It is one of his lamb days."

"It ought to be," returned Barbara; "he raged like a lion all the first of the week. Here he comes. Good-by, Nell; we'll be back before very long. You'd better go down to the other house if you get lonely." And Barbara turned to greet her brother, who had led the horses up to the block some little distance off.

"Isn't it a fine day, Roger?" she said, pleasantly, to the boy who, mounted upon his horse, was waiting for her. "We can take a good long ride. Is there anywhere we haven't been?"

"Lots of places," the boy replied, "but we'll have to be gone more than a day to get to them."

"So smart!" Barbara returned. "Never mind, Boggie, your time will come some day. You may travel the world over before you die; who knows?" And adjusting her skirt, she gathered up her bridle and turned her horse's head toward the gate. "After all, it's a dear old house," she continued. "To be sure, we don't know as much as we might, and it cannot be said that we are given over to society's claims; but then we'll do, and we're better off than most."

"Humph!" Roger replied to this cheerful philosophy; "it depends upon what you call well off." He was a sullen-looking boy, some persons said, although Barbara insisted that he had but a cloudy face. He

was a lad with an imaginative, active mind, who longed for some outlet to his activity beyond the routine of a farm.

The children's education had been carried on in a desultory way; sometimes they went to the village school; sometimes they had a governess; sometimes they were supposed to study so many hours at home each day. Their grandfather lived for his music. The farm was conducted by an overseer who lived in a small house which Helen thought a most interesting place, and with Mrs. Haynes was wont to spend much of her time. Roger did not care for the farm. He loved excitement; he longed for a bustling world; for the stir of streets and the noise of traffic. He was two years younger than Barbara, and the girl found him her most difficult problem. To steer clear of Roger's angles kept her busy. So now she did not reply, but turned in her saddle as they entered the road, and looked back at the low, rambling brown house, so quiet and peaceful in its setting of oak-trees. Upon the air came the sound of one of Mozart's sonatas; there was a glimpse of a little child standing on the porch; then a turn in the road hid all from view, and Barbara gave Fancy the word and both horses broke into a canter.

Nothing did Roger more good than a brisk gallop. It stirred his blood and made possibilities seem nearer to him, and after one of what Barbara called his lion moods she usually coaxed him to take a ride with her, when he would pour out his hopes and ambitions, and having rid himself of the burden, would be a lamb for some time after.

The three children had been left motherless when little Helen was scarce more than a baby. Of their father no one ever spoke to them. Strangers did not, because they supposed him to be dead; friends because they knew the sorrow which had clouded the life of old Mr. Palmer, and had caused him to bury himself more completely in his music. When Helen was but a few weeks old Blake Palmer had suddenly disappeared; no one knew where or why he had gone, but he had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, and nothing about him could be discovered. He had not been a bad man, except that he had been a weak one, and his gentle little wife had struggled along as best she could, trying to hope against hope, until her health failed and she went with her children to accept the home their grandfather had always offered them.

Three children in the house at first rather disturbed the old gentleman, but he left them to themselves more and more, finding that they came to little harm, and the house was big enough for him always to find a refuge somewhere.

As the eldest, Barbara felt the most responsibility, but it was hard for so young a girl to take much care upon her shoulders; consequently little Helen ran about as she felt inclined, and Roger studied or not, as the mood took him, while Barbara herself felt that it was more discreet not to attempt any interference with the housekeeping of Aunt Dibby, who had reigned supreme these fifteen years.

"Dey grows up jes' lak weeds," the old woman would say to the overseer's wife. "But, law, Mis'

Haynes, what yuh espec? Dey ain't no ma, an' ole Mr. Palmer he so boun' up in dat yer big hoss-fiddle o' his'n yuh kaint git nothin' outen him, 'ceptin' scrapin' de bow. He thinks a heap sight mo' o' dem ole mus-sified pieces o' paper what he gre't-gran'pappy done scribble out, dan he do o' dese yer chillun's book larnin'. Dey ain't gwine be eddicated lak dey ought, an' some day, Mis' Haynes, I bleedged ter speak mah min'; yuh see."

Mrs. Haynes, all astir amid crocks of milk and churnings of butter, let the old woman talk on, with little heed to what she was saying.

"Dat what ailin' little Mr. Roger; he ain't got no use fo' farmin'. He jes' lak he own daddy? He de ve'y spi't o' him. I min' Mr. Blake dat same way. He al'ays a-yarnin' fo' change an' pleasure, an' he nuver had nobody jes' hol' him down an' mek him do. He jes' run along lak he choose, fus' dis way an' then dat. He come back yit, when he git ti'ed. He min' me fo' all de worl' o' a ole cow jumpin' de fence ter git into ernuther meader what ain't no better dan de one she in. He come back yit; yuh see."

But Aunt Dibby made no such speeches to Barbara, for though the girl was so slight and quiet, there was a gentle dignity about her much like that possessed by her mother, whom she greatly resembled; and she was loyal to the last degree to that lost father, who was somewhere a captive, helpless, or unconscious of his plight, she steadfastly believed. Aunt Dibby felt a certain respect for Barbara, young as the girl was, and, although the old woman scolded Roger and ordered Helen out of the kitchen, she always gave a

submissive heed to Barbara, who so loved peace and harmony that she seemed to spend her days in smoothing away the rough places for others.

She and Roger had been galloping along over a smooth piece of road when Barbara turned to her brother with her pleasant little smile, which was always given with a shy uplifting of the eyes in the manner of a child. "Well, Roger, why has the lion raged of late?" she asked. "He shook his mane and growled most ferociously this week. What was he particularly seeking to devour this time?"

Roger answered with a sudden lighting up of his face. When Roger did smile it was like the appearance of the sun from behind clouds. "He was hungry only on general principles," he replied. "He wanted to tear something to pieces, and didn't care much what it was."

"I thought so," Barbara returned, nodding wisely and allowing her horse to drop into a walk, while Roger's did the same. "Are you ever going to be a real nice, every-day sort of a somebody, Boggie, dear?" she asked, using the pet name which she had called her brother before she could talk plainly.

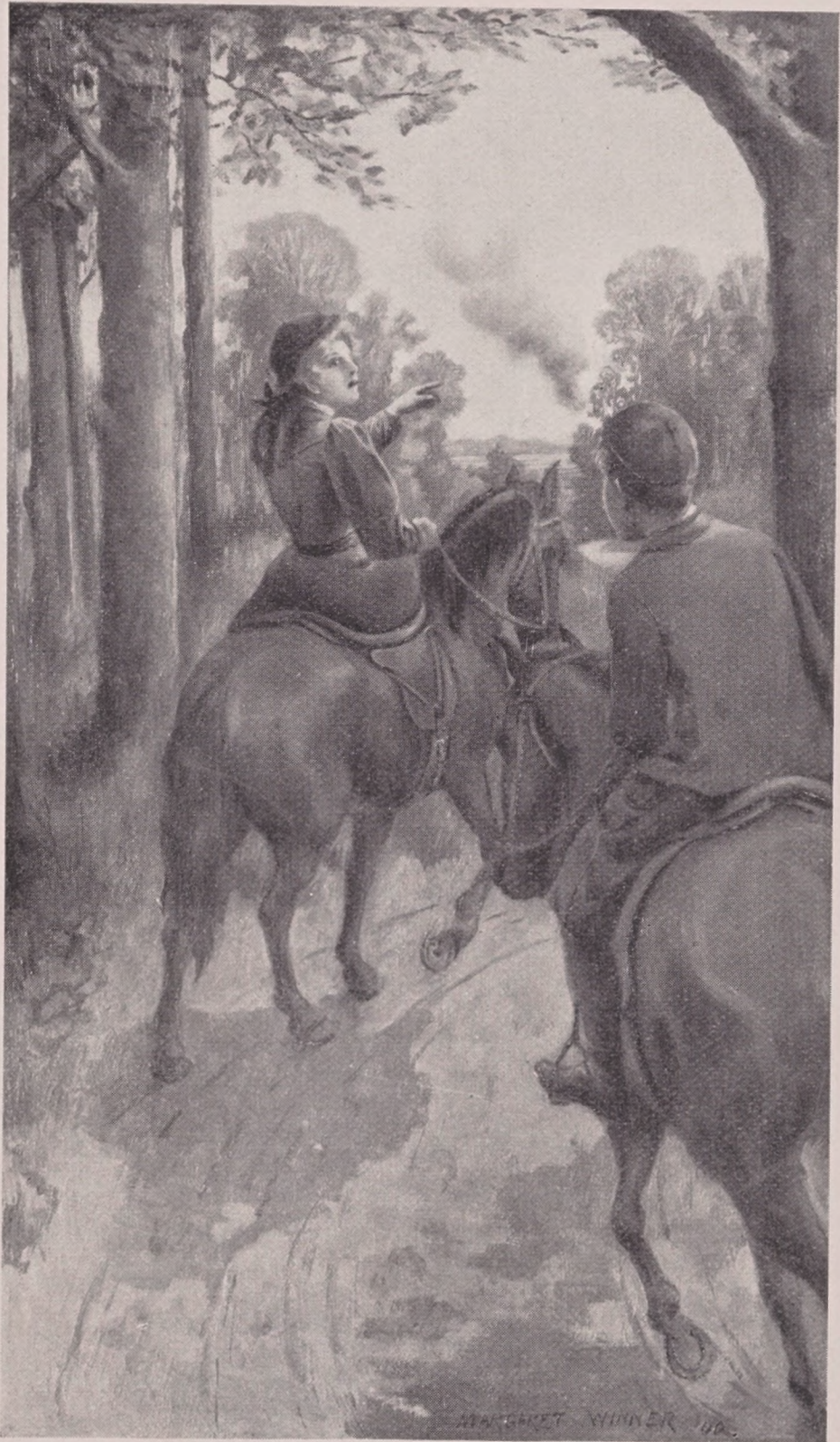
"I don't want to be an every-day sort of a somebody, Bab. I want to be something different."

"What?"

"An Edison, or some one like that."

Barbara laughed. "What a real modest sort of an ambition!"

"Oh, well, you see Edison began by being a train-boy, or some unimportant thing. I've read all about him, and I know if I only had a chance to get away



“It looks like a fire,” he replied

I'd learn telegraphy or something so I could get at machines."

"Goodness, boy! you have got at every machine on the place. Mr. Haynes says he can't keep your hands off of them."

"He'd better not try. They're grandfather's, not his. My, Bab, I wish grandpa would wake up and see something except his old 'cello."

"Now, Boggie, that isn't right. Dear old grandpa does take all the comfort in the world in his music. He has had so much trouble, and is so good not to fuss over what we do. I am sure we do exactly as we please."

"No, I don't do as I please. I please to live a different life."

"All right, Boggie; wait till you are just a little older. You know it is the unexpected that always happens. Who knows what is travelling toward us this very minute."

Having gone to the post-office, and then having taken a roundabout way home, continuing their talk, the two were at last on the brow of a hill which gave them their first glimpse of the river.

"See that light in the sky," exclaimed Barbara. "What do you suppose it is, Roger?"

"It looks like a fire," he replied, looking in the direction which Barbara indicated. "I think it is on the Virginia shore."

"It looks nearer to me," said Barbara, unconsciously urging her horse forward. "Oh, Roger, suppose it should be our house!"

"It is more likely a fire in the woods. We have had

a long drought, and everything is as dry as tinder." But he, too, hastened his horse's speed.

Redder and redder became the sky, and although each encouraged the other, fear was in the hearts of the two as the horses galloped along.

"It must be the barn!" Roger cried, as they came in sight of the farm.

"No,—oh, Roger, it is the house!" Barbara answered.

Roger raised himself in his saddle the better to see, and with the laconic, "You're right," he urged his horse to his best speed, and they went clattering up the road toward the column of smoke and shooting flame before them.

CHAPTER II

ROGER'S EXPLOIT

By the time Roger and Barbara reached the gate they saw that the house was really in flames. Men were running about shouting and carrying buckets of water. Such of the neighbors as had been able to reach the place were on hand trying to save what they could. The old house itself was beyond the hope of rescue, for being a wooden structure, well seasoned, it was impossible to prevent it from going.

Roger leaped from his horse and rushed toward the burning building.

"Roger, Roger!" called Barbara, but he, unheeding, sped on, and was almost immediately lost to sight in the cloud of smoke which was issuing from doors and windows.

"Don't try to go in," she heard someone cry; "it isn't safe!" But there was only a shout in reply, and she could not tell whether or not her brother had obeyed the caution.

Roger's love for his mother had always been his strongest redeeming trait. As a baby his sober little face would light up when she came into the room, and he was always perfectly content when she was by. He could not and would not be reconciled to her loss, and Barbara, who understood him, knew that half the time his wild fits of rebellion were the expression of his

grief as much as anything, and now it suddenly came upon her that perhaps he had wilfully sought to lose himself in the burning house; and she pressed nearer, forgetting even Helen and her grandfather in her anxiety for her brother.

"Oh, tell me," she cried to a neighbor who was standing near, "did you see Roger go inside?"

"Yes," replied the man, "I did. He ran around toward the side door and must have gone in that way. I am watching for him. It's pretty risky business going in there now, but he wouldn't listen, just rushed off like a wild creature. I suppose there was something he specially wanted to save."

It flashed over Barbara what it might be. The room her brother had entered was the library where hung most of the family portraits. It had an entrance opening upon a porch, the roof of which was already beginning to catch fire, but in the room above was hanging a portrait of the children's mother, and this must be what Roger was trying to save. A large oak-tree reached out long branches which tapped against the window of this upper room, and Barbara instantly discerned what was Roger's purpose.

"Roger, Roger!" she called, loudly and shrilly, as, jumping from her horse she ran around to the rear of the house, and looked up into the branches of the big tree. "Oh, hurry, hurry!" she cried.

The neighbor to whom she had been speaking had followed her. "Oh, Mr. Moss," she cried, "I think Roger is in that upper room; do you believe he can ever get out?"

"Sharp boy," replied Mr. Moss; "he went up this

tree, and will come down the same way if——” The sudden pause conveyed such a dreadful possibility to Barbara that she clasped her hands convulsively, and her next call missed its carrying quality.

“Roger, Roger,” she quavered, and in a moment she saw a figure staggering over the roof of the porch.

Mr. Moss rushed forward. “We’re here, Roger,” he cried, “don’t try the tree, let yourself drop. I’ll catch you.”

The boy, coming into the fresh air, gained new strength, and managed to reach the edge of the roof, one end of which was already blazing. Leaning over, Roger first let something fall which came sliding to the ground, and then he himself dropped into Mr. Moss’s outstretched arms.

“That was a pretty close shave, youngster; what possessed you to go up there?” said his friend. Roger was by this time on his feet, his smoked, blackened face and hands, singed eyebrows and hair telling that he had really been in danger. He went toward the portrait of his mother which had been the object of his attainment. “This,” he said, lifting it up from where it lay face down upon the ground. Mr. Moss said never a word, but he turned away abruptly, and, rubbing his eyes, made some remark about “this blinding smoke.”

Barbara sprang forward and clasped Roger and the portrait in her arms. “Oh, Boggie, Boggie,” she cried, “how could you risk your life for it?”

“I had to,” replied he; “let’s take it into some safe place, Bab.”

“Aren’t you hurt?” asked Barbara, anxiously.

"I am a little scorched," returned Roger, as the smarting of his face and hands gave him a realizing sense of what it meant to battle with flames.

Turning him over into Mrs. Hayne's motherly care to have his fingers swathed in oil and cotton, Barbara started forth to look up her grandfather and Helen.

The house by this time was all afire, the intense heat driving all some distance from it. From the windows the ruddy flames leaped out, the leaves upon the old oak-tree were shrivelled in the fierce glow, the swallows which had for years nested in the chimneys were circling wildly overhead, with cries of terror; it was the hour of their homing, and the poor little creatures were distraught at finding their retreat destroyed.

"Where are grandfather and Helen?" Barbara asked of the first one she met, who happened to be Mr. Haynes.

"The old gentleman is about here somewhere, and the little girl, too," was the reply. "It's clean gone, Miss Barbara, too bad! too bad! It was pretty old, but any house is better than none; we tried hard to save it, but it was no use."

Barbara soon came upon Helen clinging to Aunt Dibby. "Oh, isn't this dreadful?" cried the child.

"It is, indeed; how did it happen?" Barbara asked.

"It was all dat keerless no 'count yaller boy, Abe," replied Aunt Dibby. "He chuck de stove so full o' trash it ro'ed up de chimbley and fust hit cotched, and befo' anybody knowed it de roof done git a spark, and den hit go."

"Is nothing saved?" asked Barbara looking around in blank dismay.

"Yo' grandpappy done save he big fiddle, an' some music an' papers, an' dey drug out a few things from de fust flo', but mos' all's gone. Hit's terr'ble, honey." And the old woman shook her head mournfully.

"But no lives were lost, let us be thankful for that," said Barbara, thinking of her brother. "Come, Helen, help me to find grandfather."

The air was full of smoke and flying sparks; bits of charred timber lay over the lawn where the squirrels had been frisking gaily but a few hours before. Such pieces of furniture as could be saved were standing a little distance off by the garden gate, and just here Barbara found her grandfather, his 'cello hugged under his arm, a roll of music in one hand and in the other a tin box painted green. These he had steadfastly held from the first moment when the fire had warned him to save what was most precious. He looked bewildered, as if only half comprehending the extent of the disaster.

"Oh, grandfather, isn't this dreadful?" said Barbara; "what are we going to do?"

The old man turned his mild eyes upon her. "My great-grandfather built it," he said. "I don't know what is to be done. I can't live anywhere else," he continued, piteously, as if this sudden wrenching of himself from his accustomed routine was something he could not accept.

Helen looked up with a quivering lip. "We'll have to live somewhere, grandfather. We aren't any of us dead."

"No, no, child, that is true, we are all safe, I am very thankful, and I have saved this," with a glance

at his 'cello, "and the unpublished manuscript of Nicholas Palmer."

"Come, grandfather," said Barbara, "give me some of those things, and let us go to the other house. Mrs. Haynes will take us in, and Roger can go home with one of the neighbors," and the girl's quick wits settled the matter for the moment.

The fire was beginning to die down, only fitful flashes rising from the cloud of smoke which hovered over where the house had been.

Roger had been darting from one spot to another, filled with excitement and roused to the uttermost. Here was the unexpected indeed, and the boy could not, perhaps, be blamed for seeing ahead of the present. At Barbara's suggestion he agreed to accept the hospitality offered by Mr. Moss, and as the night came on the family separated, Mr. Palmer and his two granddaughters taking refuge in the overseer's house, Roger going to the next farm, and Aunt Dibby occupying as usual her little cabin this side the garden. Every few moments during the evening Helen would burst into tears as the memory of some lost treasure came to her.

"Oh, Barby, we'll never see mamma's portrait again."

"Oh, yes, we shall," Barbara assured her. "Didn't you know that Roger had saved that?" And she gave an account of his exploit, while her grandfather listened silently, a troubled look upon his face. "The portrait is hardly hurt at all; fortunately, it was on the farther side of the wall," explained Barbara, "and you know it was not in so heavy a frame as those in the library,

so when Roger let it fall, the frame was not smashed to pieces, and the dear portrait is quite safe, a little smoky, but that's all."

"I'm so glad," returned Helen. "How brave Roger was! He was a real brave lion that time, and no growler either."

"I wish you could have seen Mr. Moss," said Barbara, proudly, "when he invited Boggie to go home with him; he took him by the shoulders and said, 'I want the honor of your company at our house, Roger, my boy,' and I know he never used to like Roger; poor, dear Boggie!"

Here Helen's thoughts again went back to the losses. "Oh, Barbara, all our story-books are burned up, and the stereoscope, and grandmother's silver porringer."

"No, the silver ain't none of it burnt," put in Mrs. Haynes, "Dibby and I saved every smitch of it as soon as we saw the fire was bound to be."

"Oh, how good of you," returned Barbara, gratefully; "but we've no clothes left, and so many of the dear old familiar things are gone." And the tears came to Barbara's eyes, too.

It seemed very queer for the two sisters to be sleeping in the little dormer-windowed room under the roof of the tenant house; to be awakened in the morning by the sound of fowls gathered around the door to be fed; to hear Mrs. Haynes's sharp, high voice talking to Dibby; to look from the window upon a very different view of the blue Potomac from that which usually greeted them.

The river rolled on as placidly as if no tragedies could ever disturb its quiet flow, and the blue hills

beyond showed peacefully against the morning sky when the mists were lifted.

There came to Barbara the lines of a hymn which Mrs. Haynes had been singing shrilly a few moments before:

“ We shall know as we are known,
Nevermore to walk alone ;
In the dawning of the morning,
When the mists are cleared away.”

“ There are a great many mists to be cleared away for us,” she said to the waking Helen.

“ Are there?” responded Helen, sleepily. “ Oh, yes, I forgot, this isn’t home. Oh, Barby, where are we going to live?” she asked, sitting up.

“ I don’t know,” returned Barbara, gravely. “ It is all a very uncertain outlook.”

“ Do you suppose grandfather will send us all away from here? Perhaps he will have to. Oh, Barby, suppose he should send us each to a different school.” And Helen’s eyes filled.

“ Oh, my dearie, I am sure he will not do that. Grandfather wouldn’t separate us; he may seem indifferent, but he is never cruel, and it is because he is absent-minded and absorbed that he ever seems to neglect us. I don’t mean even that, but so long as we seem well and happy he doesn’t imagine there is any necessity for looking further. Poor, dear grandfather! I have seen him stop in the walk to pick up a caterpillar and set it out of the way for fear someone would step on it, so he must have a very tender heart, Helen.”

The little girl sat thoughtfully turning this over in



Barbara read the Forty-sixth Psalm

her mind. Any settlement of the family affairs was quite beyond her, and she crept out of bed and sat down to put on her shoes and stockings feeling that a very strange and untrod way lay before her.

"It would be queer to live with Mrs. Haynes," she said, presently, "and there isn't any other house on the place. I'm all in a tangle, Barby."

"Don't try to untangle it yet. Don't you remember mother's favorite psalm? Let's get it and I'll read it to you; there is a Bible over on that table." And with her little sister's head on her shoulder, Barbara read the Forty-sixth Psalm. "Now," said she, as she closed the book, "let's leave the worrying till we find out what grandfather says; he may have some good plan."

"It seems funny for grandfather to have plans," replied Helen. "He isn't like Mr. and Mrs. Haynes. Mrs. Haynes is always wanting to accomplish something."

Barbara laughed. It was Mrs. Haynes's favorite expression.

But the girl's confidence in her grandfather was not misplaced, for the grave, gentle old man who half the night had walked the floor of the room below them, gave them the answer to their problem that day. It may have been that he was influenced by the remark which someone once made to him, "If you want to find anyone who is missing, go to the big cities first." Did he think of his son, Blake Palmer, when he trod the floor restlessly that night after the fire? At any rate, he made his purpose known when Roger appeared the next morning.

"I suppose you'll build again right away, Mr.

Palmer," Mrs. Haynes said, with some curiosity. "You'll be right comfortable here for a while, and we can fix up the other attic for Mister Roger, so you needn't feel you're putting us out. You ain't a bit. You're as welcome as can be. Me and Mr. Haynes talked it over last night. You won't be disturbed if you want to play your music, and you won't disturb us."

Mr. Palmer raised a thin hand deprecatingly. "Thank you, madam," he said. "I shall not rebuild; what is gone is gone. Perhaps I have lived too long with memories. Perhaps I needed the discipline of fire in more than one way," he said, half to himself. "We shall be glad to accept your hospitality for a few days, and then——"

"And then?" echoed Helen, going up to him and putting her hand on his shoulder. "Oh, grandfather, you are not going to send us away? not from the ducks and the chickens, and my dear little fairy dell down by the spring, and from old Dolly, and—and—oh, grandfather!" And the child's face was pitifully anxious.

Barbara sat leaning forward, her eyes fixed upon Roger, who had just come in.

"Yes," replied Mr. Palmer, giving a long sigh, "from all those, my child, and from much more. I am going to let Mr. Haynes take care of the farm. It is best so, for more than one reason. I can publish the sonata, and there will be great opportunities for all of us. We are going to the city,—to New York."

CHAPTER III

FAREWELLS

THE children looked at each other in amazement when their grandfather made known his decision. Of the three, Roger was the most pleased; but even to Barbara the prospect was not without a certain pleasant excitement. Not once in the last five years had either brother or sisters been out of the county. The agricultural fair had given the nearest approach to a crowd that they had known. The family wardrobe had been supplied from the nearest village, and the little old dress-maker, whose meagre fashion-plates were much pored over, directed the fashioning of the gowns which Barbara and Helen wore.

There was a dead pause after Mr. Palmer's announcement, till Barbara broke the silence by saying, "Well, we shall not have much packing to do, for we've only the clothes upon our backs. When do we go, grandfather? I shall have to get Miss Gates to make something. I haven't even a frock, for I had on my riding-skirt when the fire broke out, and have had to borrow a skirt from Mrs. Haynes."

"There is no need of delay," replied her grandfather. "As soon as Miss Gates can make you comfortable we can go. You had best go to see her this morning and get what you absolutely need for the present. We can depend upon New York to supply us in the future."

There was something exhilarating in the thought. Barbara fancied how delightful it would be to go shopping in those fine shops of which she had only a dim idea. She remembered going with her mother once or twice, when quite little, to the city, and the recollection was a pleasant one, including the early start from the small village in which they had then lived, the trip on the cars, and the luncheon taken at some place where ice-cream was always an important article on the bill of fare.

She looked over at Roger with a gleam of amusement, as she considered how very unfamiliar city life was to them. "Oh, Boggie," she said, "how green we shall be!"

Roger scowled, and then Helen came up and slipped a hand in her sister's. "Barby," she whispered, "can't I take Ducky Daddles?"

Barbara laughed. "I don't see why you should not," she returned. "Do you want to go to Miss Gates's with me? You will have to have a frock too; you could never travel in that faded gingham." And after breakfast the two started off, as they had done many times before, in the old buggy towards the village some three miles distant.

It was, of course, to be expected that the news of the fire had reached the village before them, and that it was the chief theme of conversation in the post-office, the blacksmith-shop, and the country store; so, when Barbara and Helen drove through the one straggling street, their approach was the signal for heads to be poked from the windows, and hands to beckon from doors. But Barbara did not waste time in discussing

the situation, and beyond a cheery "good morning," paid no heed. "They will hear it all from Miss Gates," she said. "There is no use telling the story over and over. Everyone will be rushing to Miss Gates as soon as we leave. She'll have a lot of callers to-day, you'll see." And Barbara laughed softly as she drew up before a little white frame house.

It was early fall, and the garden before Miss Gates's modest dwelling was gay with dahlias and China asters. The lady herself responded to Barbara's knock. She was all eagerness in her manner of greeting her customer, the little gray curls on each side her face bobbing in her flurry to get the girls inside her small sitting-room.

A very old lady sat by the window; she gave a mild sort of cackle as she saw Barbara and Helen. "Mother," screamed Miss Gates to the old lady, who was evidently very deaf, "this is Barbary and Helen Palmer; you know they got burnt out yesterday."

"Don't say!" exclaimed the old lady with one hand to her ear.

"Speak up loud, Barbary," said Miss Gates, "mother is deafer'n usual this morning."

Barbara mischievously refrained from entering into any account of the fire, but began with the business which brought her. "We came to see if you could make Helen and me each a frock right away, Miss Gates; this week, if possible."

"Why, let me see," replied Miss Gates, caressing her chin with one hand. "I reckon so; Miss Armiger's dress is most finished. Did you bring the goods along, Barbary?"

"No, we are going to the store next."

"I suppose you haven't saved a stitch," remarked Miss Gates, skilfully bringing the subject around to the desired point.

"Nothing, except what we have on; in fact, this skirt belongs to Mrs. Haynes, and we shall need something to travel in."

"Travel!" and Miss Gates, in her surprise, dropped the scissors she held. "You don't say! Oh, I suppose you'll take a little trip while your grandfather is rebuilding; that will be real nice. We heard he meant to start the new house right away."

"There isn't to be any new house," returned Barbara. "We're going to New York to live." Miss Gates's curls bobbed more vigorously than ever, as she leaned over to her mother and shouted, "Do you hear, mother? They are going to New York to live."

"Don't say?" responded Mrs. Gates in the same inquiring manner.

"Dear! dear! we'll be sorry to lose you," said Miss Gates; "not that we see much of you, but I was saying to mother the other day that you would be a young lady soon, and there'd be no telling what changes might come then; but they've come, sure enough." Then she questioned closely about the fire, and Barbara, knowing there was no help for it, gave as exhaustive an account as she could, knowing with what gusto it would be retailed. After further talk about their frocks, the girls took their leave, promising to leave the goods on the return from the store.

"It will all have to be gone over again at Mr. Daw-

son's," she said to Helen. "It is rather tiresome to be such objects of interest."

The business at the store was soon despatched despite the questions with which the girls were plied. Mr. Dawson's stock of goods was not large, and it did not take Barbara long to make her choice. She had naturally good taste, but it had been rather too strongly influenced by the dressiness of the girls of the neighborhood, who usually considered that showy attire betokened extreme elegance, and who wore wonderful structures for hats, and had cheap, flimsy materials made up in the mode that would only have suited a rich fabric. Therefore when Barbara selected a blue serge, it is to be deplored that she had it "brightened up" with quantities of little brass buttons and gay plaid trimmings, and that Helen's frock, it was decided, should be made after a pattern suitable for a grown woman.

Having concluded her purchases with some furnishings for Roger, Barbara turned her horse's head towards the farm, stopping before Miss Gates's gay little garden to leave her parcels.

As she drove up the long street the nearness of the change became uncomfortably real to her. "Oh, Helen," she said, "only a few more days, and then we shall take our last drive behind old Dolly through this town."

The tears, which seemed very near Helen's eyes these days, began to gather. "I don't want to go, sister; but do you know what Mrs. Dawson said while you were talking to her husband? She said, 'Perhaps you'll come across your father in New York.' Do

you believe we shall, Barby? Do you think he is really living?"

Barbara was always loyal to this lost father. "No," she said, shaking her head sadly. "I do not believe we shall find him in New York. I do not think he would have stayed away from us all this time if he had been alive."

"Does grandfather think so? Is that why he wants to go?"

Barbara hesitated. "I think perhaps it is one reason. I do not believe he has ever given up the hope of seeing papa again. But never say anything about it, Helen. He does not like to have us mention the subject."

In a few days the little family turned their backs upon the heap of blackened ruins which had once been home, and started for New York. The children had hugged old Dolly, and wept upon her mane; had embraced each kitten and puppy, and would have been willing to bestow the same attentions upon each feathered fowl, but that they were cut short in their leavetakings by the appearance of Mr. Haynes with the carriage.

Dibby, it is to be regretted, absolutely refused to go with them, to the dismay of Barbara. "But, Dibby," she had protested, "how am I to get along without you?"

"You'll git along; the city's full o' every sort and kin' o' domeskits, and you'll git plenty 'thout an old 'ooman lak me pickin' up an' gwine along. I ain't use to no sich doin's as I hyar' 'bout in New York, an' I ain't gwine."

But at the last the old creature broke down, and if there had been time for her to reconsider her decision she would doubtless have agreed to go, so hard did the parting seem.

Helen, with a large basket containing her favorite kitten, Toby, and a small box in which Ducky Daddles reposed, choked back the tears as she climbed into the carriage, and only smiled when Barbara whispered that it would never do to pickle Ducky in tears. Toby and Ducky, it must be confessed, served somewhat to enliven the journey by the amusement they afforded the fellow-passengers, for the last interjected a solemn "quee! quee!" at different stages of the journey, while the kitten required to be taken out frequently and coddled. But Helen was not put out of countenance by Roger's scowl nor the smiles about her, and she devoted herself to the remnant of a barn-yard colony with a devotion which amused even her grandfather.

This stirring out of his accustomed environment seemed to rouse the old gentleman to a keener observance of his grandchildren and he unfolded his plans with less reticence than usual.

"We shall first go to a hôtel, and then look for apartments," he told them, and this suggested all sorts of possibilities.

With what sensations did the children step from the ferry-boat, when the rattling of the chain announced that New York was reached. Here was the great city full of mystery; full of life. They would presently be plunged into a busy world thrilling with incident and bewildering experiences. Such a crowd of people! From what place were they coming?

Where were they going? Why didn't they get lost in such a confused hubbub? It seemed as if each one was bent upon pushing his neighbor out of the way. All was rush, bustle, confusion.

"Oh, grandfather," gasped Barbara, as they stepped upon the street where a long procession of drays and wagons confronted them. "Do we have to cross? Oh, how can we?"

"Keep close to me," her grandfather replied. "We will manage as the others do." And slipping Barbara's hand in one arm, holding Helen's fingers, and bidding Roger to follow, he started, the children feeling that they were taking their lives in their hands by flinging themselves into that jumble of ponderous vehicles and heavy-hoofed horses, not to mention the on-rushing crowd which threatened to walk up their backs, so it seemed to Barbara; and she breathed a sigh of relief when they were fairly over, and were on Cortlandt Street making their way to Broadway.

It was rather a droll procession which walked into the big hotel; the tall, spare old gentleman, followed by a boy, whose heavy, clumsy shoes fell heavily on the tessellated pavement of the corridor; next the two girls, Barbara wearing a hat, the feathers of which hung limply on account of a drizzle which had set in, and Helen carrying a basket from which issued plaintive mews, these being supplemented by protesting quacks from Ducky Daddles. It is not much wonder that the clerk at the desk smiled as he gave the keys to the hall boy who was to show them to their rooms. Helen, who had never in her life seen an elevator, gave a terrified little "Oh!" as the small closet into which

they were ushered, for what reason she did not know, suddenly began to ascend. Barbara and Roger had made up their minds that they would take everything as a matter of course, and shook their heads warningly, as they saw the amusement visible upon the face of the hall boy.

“Oh, how high up we are!” exclaimed Helen, looking from the fifth story window of the room into which she and Barbara were shown. “And see, Barbara, there are buildings ever so much higher all around. Shall we have to live in any of those? I believe I should be afraid to. There is one, let me see, one, two, three—twelve stories high.”

A long stay at the hotel was not within Mr. Palmer's calculations, and he started out the next morning to look for apartments, after consulting the advertisements in the daily papers. Barbara begged to go with him, and, leaving Helen under the wing of a good-natured chambermaid, the others set forth.

It was a long, wearisome task, bringing no success, but Barbara, whose bump of locality was largely developed, became quite familiar with certain sections of the city, and the next day, seeing that her grandfather was entirely outdone by all these unusual exertions, she begged to be allowed to carry on the search alone. “I shall not get lost,” she declared. “I will only go where I am sure of my bearings, and if I should lose my way I will ask a policeman to tell me how to get back here.” So she was allowed her way, and started forth very much excited over the prospect of going even a few blocks alone in New York.

Mr. Palmer had decided upon finding an unfurnished

flat, as being most nearly within his means, and Barbara had set her heart upon securing one in the vicinity of Washington Square, that green park appealing strongly to her fancy, and so she turned in that direction, passing before an apartment house which bore upon a board set before the door,—

STEAM HEATED JANITOR INSIDE.

Barbara chuckled to herself as she noted the sign. "I suppose the steam-heated janitor will tell me all I need to know," and she rang the first bell that she saw. Presently the door opened mysteriously, but no one appeared. "The wind must have blown it open," thought Barbara, and she carefully shut it, then rang a second time that she might summon some one. Again the door opened as if some unseen hand held the knob. "How funny!" thought Barbara; "every time I ring the door opens." And then it dawned upon her that there was method in it; and later on she found how easy it was to pull a knob, or touch a button in the apartments above to open the front door. In a short time a head appeared from the basement.

"What d'ye want?" was asked.

"The janitor."

"Then phwy don't ye ring the janitor's bell?" And looking at the other side of the door she saw a second bell which she rang, and a man with a very red face appeared.

"He looks as if he might be steam-heated," reflected

Barbara. At her request to look at flats the man led the way up-stairs to what seemed to the girl to be an extraordinary height, and she made her inquiries, but came to the conclusion that even this fifth floor would be beyond her grandfather's limit.

While she was still looking curiously at the conveniences and inconveniences the janitor was called below. "Just close the dhure, if ye plaze, whin ye come down," he said; "I've a call down-stairs." And being sure that Barbara was a harmless individual, who would neither steal lead pipes nor set fire to the place, he left her, and she proceeded with her investigations.

"I'd like to see down into that yard," thought the girl, when, having walked the length of the apartment, she came to the kitchen which looked upon an open court, and she raised the window.

A swirl of wind rushing through the empty rooms slammed the entry door violently, as Barbara discovered by the noise. "Let me see," she soliloquized, "seven, no, eight rooms all on one floor. How funny it will be to live right over other people's heads? How new it all is! But such tiny rooms. I don't see how we could be comfortable, and fifty dollars a month is too much; we'll have to do better than this." And she turned to go. But rattle the knob as she would, pushing back the catch, using all her strength to pull, to push, she could not open the door. She was shut in.

CHAPTER IV

FOURTH FLOOR BACK

FOR a moment Barbara felt inclined to cry and then to laugh. Then she set her wits to work to find a way of getting out. First she banged violently on the door, but this brought no response. The house had been very lately completed, the few flats occupied were on the first and second floors.

"Perhaps there is another way out," she thought, after sitting down on a window-sill and waiting for some time in hopes that some one would appear; but, although she tried every door, she could discover none that afforded a means of exit from the flat. There was, to be sure, one that opened into what appeared to be a bottomless closet where several pieces of rope seemed to hang. "I wonder what this is?" she thought to herself, and while she was peering down through the opening she heard a clattering sound, and her eyes getting accustomed to the dimness she saw something moving.

"Hallo!" she cried.

"Hallo!" came from below. "Wait a minute, I'll send her up."

"Send who up?" thought Barbara; but following her query came the answer in the shape of a dumb-waiter or elevator,—a shelf within a box. "Well!" exclaimed Barbara; "it isn't much like the elevator at the hotel. I wonder if they expect me to go down on this; it's rather small."

"Anything coming down?" called a voice from below.

"Yes," returned Barbara, squeezing herself in and sitting bent over on the shelf. "Now," she called. And she felt herself descending, down, down, down, until with a thud she came to the first floor, to be met by the amazed countenance of a stalwart butcher boy, who jumped back as he caught sight of the girl crouched in the dumb-waiter.

"Why, why," he stammered, "where did you come from?"

"Help me out, please," said Barbara, and the boy gave his assistance, the surprise on his face giving place to a grin, as Barbara explained her predicament.

"This ain't no passenger elevator," he said, "but it's all right for one this time. I'm waiting for some things to go back to the store; the girl on the second floor was to send them down and I thought you was them."

Barbara laughed. "I'm very glad you did think so, and I am very much obliged to you, for I don't know when I should have gotten out but for hearing you call up."

"Door must have stuck," returned the boy. "They often does in these yer new flats. They rush 'em up cheap and the wood gets warped. I'm glad I was on hand." And Barbara, with renewed thanks, proceeded to make her way through the hall toward the front door, according to the boy's directions. She couldn't help laughing quietly to herself as she went.

"What a joke on me," she thought. "Shall I tell them about it when I get back. I think I must, it is

too good to keep. I certainly didn't expect to have an adventure so soon. Let me see, down one block, then around the corner. Now I'm all right," and she returned to the hotel to find Helen only, waiting for her, Mr. Palmer and Roger having gone out on another search. Barbara related her experience, to Helen's great amusement.

"I never should have thought of getting into such a little place," she said.

"I don't suppose I should if I had known just what it was. It was a case of 'where ignorance is bliss.' But it served my purpose, and here I am."

A further wearisome hunt proved unsuccessful in the finding of a suitable habitation, and Barbara became quite discouraged. "Such a great, immense city and no place for us," she said to her grandfather. "I don't see where we are to go."

Several days passed and the question still remained unsettled, but, as is often the case, upon the very day after Barbara's greatest discouragements, a small flat was found within the bounds set. It was not so near the park as Barbara had hoped it would be, nor was it in one of the fine new buildings, all glitter and show, which towered up in the upper part of the city. It was the fourth floor of a building which had once been a private house and had been turned into apartments, there being only a few in the building, and these comparatively roomy and of moderate price. The elevated trains rumbled rather too near them for absolute peace, so Barbara reflected, but she was told they would soon become accustomed to the noise, and there were really no very objectionable features in the immediate en-

vironment. That night, therefore, Barbara went to sleep with a feeling of relief that this first difficulty was settled.

But following this came experiences which the girl found strangely new,—the settling of the family in their new habitation. Even though necessity made their grandfather step from his world of dreams to the more practical matters of buying furnishings, and discussing with his granddaughter the merits of carpets and dishes, there was still much which the girl's shoulders, young as they were, had to bear alone. Many times both she and her grandfather were cheated in their trustfulness of tradesmen, but they were drawn more closely together, and Barbara began to understand something of what her grandfather must have been before sorrow changed him.

The chambermaid at the hotel came to their aid in the matter of finding a maid, and one afternoon, with Toby and Ducky Daddles, they all left the hotel to take up quarters in their new home.

Helen could hardly reconcile herself to establishing Ducky in the kitchen, and, indeed, she seemed rather out of place there, but when Barbara showed her sister that a yard of their own was something not to be expected in connection with a modern flat, and that the clothes would have to be dried on the roof, Helen accepted the situation. Toby, however, was more easily managed, and, after poking his inquisitive little nose into every corner and closet, curled himself up on a chair and went to sleep.

Roger bestirred himself in helping to get the rooms into comfortable condition, and before a week was over

they had all become used to hearing their grandfather scraping away on his 'cello in the front room, while the elevated trains thundered by, making a constant crescendo and diminuendo accompaniment to the symphony the old man played.

The next problem was that of school for these three country-bred children. Roger, whose mathematics had always been his strong point, found no trouble in entering a class with boys of his own age at the public school near by, but poor little Helen shed bitter tears at being so far behind other girls of her age, and begged to be allowed to stay at home. But having awakened to a sense of his responsibility in this respect, Mr. Palmer was firm, and Helen was comforted by her sister, who dreaded more than either of the others an entrance into a class of strange companions, and who felt that she could not endure that first week of tedium and restraint, with at home no secluded corner where she could weep out her heartache alone. And, indeed, it is small wonder that the girl sometimes felt in despair, seeing that she was mother, house-keeper, and pupil, all at the same time.

There were so many things to master even in the direction of marketing, that but for her friend the butcher's boy, whom she opportunely came across, she would have floundered into many mistakes. The sturdy lad, however, having at the very outset helped Barbara out of her dilemma in the elevator, felt when he met her again that she must be the object of his special care, and gave her sly hints as to what was fresh and desirable, so that in this wise she began to fare better as time went on.

But Ducky grew apace. "I don't know what to do with her," said Helen one day. "I wish we could send her somewhere in the country."

"I'll ask Ike if he knows any one who will take her," said Barbara.

Thus Ducky Daddles became the one member of the family who could not adapt herself to city surroundings, and was so frequently discussed that even Mr. Palmer became quite interested in suggesting the best plan for a satisfactory disposal of this "duck out of water."

But to keep up with her classes and attend to her other duties as well gave Barbara such divided interests that she could do nothing well. She possessed a quick mind, and had already acquired knowledge far beyond that of most girls of her age by reading books selected for her by her grandfather, but in certain directions she was deficient and found it a struggle to keep up with her classes. With her temperament and peculiar rearing, it is, therefore, doubtful if a public school was the best place for her. She found little time for sight-seeing, and the wonders of the city were only known to her through Roger's accounts of them, he being indefatigable in his searches for novel sights.

Once Barbara cautioned him against getting lost.

"No fear of that. I know how to use my tongue at the proper time, even if I'm not much of a talker. I've got lots of new ideas, one of them I mean to work out," returned Roger, who looked brighter and happier these days. "Say, Barby, grandfather isn't very rich, is he?"

"Rich? of course he isn't. We shouldn't be living

in a cheap flat and having only such furnishings as we can get along with if he were."

"I used to think we were as rich as anybody around where we lived in the country," replied Roger.

"That was 'a horse of another color,' as Mr. Haynes would say, or, to use another one of his sayings, he was 'a big frog in a little puddle.' Now we are in a very big puddle, and grandfather is only a small frog, while we are the tiniest kind of tadpoles. The tenements are the worst of all," she went on. "When I think of the wretched-looking people I see when I go to market, it makes me so unhappy. Speaking of shopping, I shall have to do some for you, Miss Helen, now that you are going to school. No more Miss Gates. We'll have to buy everything ready made; that will be the easiest way. The newspaper is full of advertisements of the most wonderful bargains, and the shop-windows, too, so no doubt we shall have no trouble in getting what we want. You can take the dress Miss Gates made, for school, and I'll get something else for best. I want to go to that beautiful church to-morrow, the one where we heard such lovely music."

"Oh, yes, and where the sweet-looking lady asked us to sit in her pew. I liked her, Barby. I wish I could see her again."

"You'll go with us, Boggie?" said Barbara, inquiringly.

"Oh, I don't know; why should I?"

"Mamma would like it," Barbara answered, softly. And Roger was on hand the next morning when church time came.

A few days after, Helen rushed in with the news that she had discovered who was the sweet lady.

"Oh, Barby," she cried, "such a nice s'prise; what do you think?"

Barbara was trying to divide her attention equally between her lessons and the problem of the day's marketing, and not being equal to it, was rather glad of the interruption.

"What do I think?" she repeated. "I think I'd like most any kind of a surprise just now. What is it?"

"You know the lovely lady in church. Well, she lives right on the next floor, and her name is Mrs. Gardner. I read it on the letter box."

"How do you know she is the same?"

"I saw her in the hall, and she smiled and nodded; and then while you were out this morning Toby got out and ran down-stairs. A door was open, and he ran in. I didn't know what to do, so I followed him and knocked at the door, and the lovely lady came, and she said, 'Are you trying to find your kitten? Come in and get him.' And oh, Barby, it is such a lovely place, not a bit like ours; it has lovely pictures on the walls, and queer, beautiful things everywhere. I think she must be a lady we hear singing, and she liked Toby, and said she wanted me to show her Mr. Ducky Daddles. She squeezes up her eyes in such a nice funny way when she laughs. I had to go to school, so I brought Toby back and ran. Aren't you glad the lady lives here?"

"Yes I am. I wish I knew her."

"You don't get intimate with any of the girls at school, do you?"

"N-o, but never mind. I see lots of funny things to amuse me. But—but I do wish I could go to an art school instead of this one."

"Oh, Barby, you can draw beautifully now. I wish you could see Mrs. Gardner's pictures."

"Well, maybe I shall. I must go now and see what Annie is doing; grandfather will be here directly."

Helen sat thinking very hard for some time after her sister left her, and then a sudden resolution seized her, and she went to the room she shared with Barbara, and, after rummaging through several bureau drawers, she found a roll of papers which she slipped under her apron, then went down to call on her new friend in the flat below.

The result of her call Mrs. Gardner made known to her husband that evening. "There are some very interesting people in the flat above," she said. "The dearest, chubbiest little girl has been to see me. She was with her sister at church one Sunday, they sat in our pew."

"The interesting looking girl with the beautiful paintable hair?"

"Yes, the very same."

"She'd make a stunning study in color. I'd like to make a sketch of her."

"Well, those two, with the queer-looking boy we have seen sometimes, live with their grandfather, and he is the one who plays the 'cello so well. That dear cunning tot brought some drawings her sister had done, and I want you to look at them. I think she shows ability." And Mrs. Gardner displayed the poor

little drawings which Helen had concealed under her apron.

Mr. Gardner regarded them critically. "They show truth," he said, "and that's a good deal. I'd like to talk to that girl. Go and see them, can't you?"

"I mean to. Poor things, motherless and lonely in this big city. My heart goes out to them."

"Of course it does," said Mr. Gardner. "Surely that is a way your heart has—bless it."

And the very next day Mrs. Gardner found an opportunity of paying her call, for Toby, having once found his way into the hall, made use of his knowledge to start on a second investigating tour, and Mrs. Gardner, discovering him, went to the door of the Palmer's flat with the little runaway. She found the door ajar. No one responded to her gentle knock, and she entered the first room. Seeing no one she passed on to the next, and, looking through the open door which led into the kitchen, she saw, sitting in the middle of the floor, a girl crying most forlornly.

CHAPTER V

BETTER PLANS

THE sight of Barbara's tears was too much for Mrs. Gardner's tender heart, and she forgot all formality in her sympathy with the girl before her.

"Why, you poor little child," she cried, kneeling down beside her. "What is the matter? Come, don't cry."

"The fire is out, and I don't know how to manage the range, nor how to get dinner, and Toby is lost, and I am so tired and cross."

"Why, where is your maid?"

"She has gone," replied Barbara, wiping her eyes, "and I am so glad."

"You look delighted," replied Mrs. Gardner, with a flash of humor.

Barbara looked up with a little smile.

"Your kitty is quite safe. He came down to call on me, so I have brought him home."

"Oh, that wretched girl! she told me she had turned him into the street, and she said so many dreadful, insulting things, and she has broken nearly all our dishes. I wish we could have brought Dibby, I am so dreadfully ignorant."

"I wish you could have brought somebody. It is too much to expect of a little girl like you, to manage the affairs of a family," returned Mrs. Gardner, with some heat. "Now, don't worry, dear child. Just con-

sider me the new cook. My husband, fortunately, dines with a friend this evening, and my maid has her afternoon out, so I can help you about your dinner if you will let me. No, no, never mind," as Barbara began to protest. "I know all about emergencies, I have struggled through dozens of them. We'll call this a cooking-class if you like, or anything that sounds entertaining. Have you planned what to have for dinner?"

"No; I want something easy, I don't care what. I'll do the marketing if you will only tell me what to get."

"Suppose you have some oysters, and—do you know that nice German store where they keep cooked meats? You can get some cold boiled ham there; then we'll kindle the fire and roast some potatoes, and have a salad and coffee; then, if you will accept a pie, I shall be delighted to furnish one from my pantry. We baked some this morning."

Barbara was only too glad to meet any suggestion gratefully, and before a half-hour was over one could hardly have recognized the unhappy little maid in the brisk girl who replied to Mrs. Gardner's merry sallies with answering wit, and when Helen came in from school she was overjoyed to find her lovely lady had taken her place as friend of the family. In her eyes she seemed lovelier than ever.

The dinner was a great success. At the urgent request of the two girls, Mrs. Gardner stayed to share it rather than to eat a solitary meal in her own apartment.

"We want you to help us eat your pie," Barbara

said. "I think it is quite in apple-pie order that you should."

Mrs. Gardner laughed, and was secretly glad of an opportunity to meet Mr. Palmer, whose music had interested her.

This gentleman was rather taken aback to find a new element controlling the household, but it had been a long time since he had met a charming woman who was not only an accomplished musician, but an able critic, and he gradually warmed and brightened under this genial influence till Barbara wondered why she had never known that her grandfather could be so agreeable. He even took from its case the old manuscript and displayed it to his visitor, as if he were showing a rare and precious treasure. That Mrs. Gardner handled it reverently, and looked at it carefully and critically, made its value rise in the eyes of the children, who were wont to look rather unappreciatively upon this heirloom. "You must publish it, Mr. Palmer," Mrs. Gardner said, as she handed it back to him.

The old man's hands fairly trembled with pleasure and excitement as he replaced the manuscript in its case and thanked his guest for her interest.

And Mrs. Gardner's good work did not end here. Biding her time, one day with gentle tact, she drew Mr. Palmer's attention to Barbara's needs. The installing of a new maid did not prevent the little housekeeper from getting into many difficulties, so that with mending and housekeeping, marketing and shopping, all demanding her attention, she found attending school punctually an impossibility.

The next maid proved dishonest, and another change of servants was inevitable, when Mrs. Gardner met the dilemma with a proposition to Mr. Palmer which gained universal favor. This, moreover, from the added fact that complaints from the occupants of one of the flats had been made of the 'cello practice which was pronounced a nuisance, to Mr. Palmer's great distress.

It was here that Mrs. Gardner came to the rescue. "I have some dear old friends," she said. "They are Germans, and Herr Blumenbach is a teacher of violin. He is a man of fine mind, and his wife is a dear, motherly old lady. They have a grown son who is a civil engineer and absent from home most of the time. He is their only charge, unless you count his two dogs, which are more of a care than the son is. Well, on account of their two big dogs they have taken a little house with a garden attached. It is in what used to be old Greenwich Village, and they asked me to keep my eyes open for some one to share the house with them. I think they would board any one who might prove satisfactory. So it occurred to me in the middle of the night that you all might be very comfortable there, and find congenial surroundings without the care of housekeeping. I know your objection to boarding, Mr. Palmer, and I quite share it, but I think this will be another thing entirely, for you will be welcomed as one of the fraternity when your 'cello is mentioned, and I am quite sure Herr Blumenbach will embrace you when he sees that manuscript. And this little girl will have more time for study." And

the dear lady smiled down at Barbara, whose face showed her pleasure at the proposition.

"My husband and I have talked you over finely, Miss Barbara," continued Mrs. Gardner, "and Mr. Gardner says he thinks an art school of the proper kind will afford you the best opportunity. He knows a man whose talks are a liberal education in themselves. Mr. Adams is head instructor in a small art school, and I know you would like him. Can't you come to my husband's studio and talk it over with him? What do you think of all this planning, Mr. Palmer? Am I very meddlesome?"

"Meddlesome! my dear madam. You are most kind to interest yourself about us. I can only say, thank you, most cordially," replied Mr. Palmer. "Your account of your German friends awakens my happiest memories of youthful days when I was abroad, a student at Leipsic."

"And you have really studied in Germany? That would add another spoke to your wheel."

And before the week was out the arrangements were completed, and the family, Ducky Daddles and Toby included, had settled down in their new quarters, where even the dogs were so well behaved that they offered no objection to the newcomers, and, even if they did not quite approve of Toby, made no sign beyond sitting very stiffly erect, giving him sidelong glances when he frisked too near them, while Ducky Daddles splashed around in a big pan of water, or waddled comfortably about the yard in entire content.

And now the days sped as if on wings it seemed to Barbara. She never forgot that first visit to Mr. Gard-

ner's studio, nor his kind interest in her. A wonderful place she found the studio, with queer casts and draperies, odd bits of armor, dusky corners rich in color, and, best of all, the pictures about which Mr. Gardner talked so interestingly, giving Barbara a new sense of the seriousness of his profession, so that she did not wonder at his wife's sweet faith, and her gentle remark, "We are here to help each other."

And it was decided that Barbara should enter the art school. Exactly how the arrangements were made she did not know, but she was free to go, her grandfather told her, and good Herr Blumenbach, who by this time was a fast friend, called her "eine künstler mädchen," as he pinched her cheek. "She kom home mit vonderful peecture von day," he said, encouragingly.

But before this, Mrs. Gardner took her to see the pictures and curious, interesting things at the Metropolitan Museum. It is doubtful if the place ever had a more appreciative visitor.

"Free on certain days in the week, and can I come here whenever I like? Oh, why isn't it crowded all the time? What makes people so stupid as not to come when they can?" And Barbara was actually wrathful over the unappreciative portion of the public. Real mummies, and real sarcophagi, strange objects so old that they suggested nothing later than the days of Moses! Mrs. Gardner could hardly drag the child away, and Barbara declared her resolve of coming once a week, "till I am filled," she said.

And then the libraries, why hadn't she been told of them? "Why, Mrs. Gardner," she said, "here I have

been in New York all this time and didn't know anything about it. How good of you to open my eyes! I believe I shall like it here after all."

One day she and Helen made a pilgrimage out to the park to see the animals. It was Roger who discovered that treat, and he came home wildly excited over the collection. "My! this place is great," he said. "I've learned more here than I ever did in all my sixteen years."

Roger was very busy these days. At school he held his own. The boys, who at first hazed him, gradually let him alone when they found out that one after another met his match, and that Roger Palmer was not to be trifled with.

He liked young Mr. Blumenbach, who upon his flying visits home had won Roger's confidence by showing an interest in electrical engineering and all sorts of mechanical work. To him, therefore, Roger shamefacedly showed the first rough idea of his last invention.

"Why, boy," said Mr. Karl, "that is really practical. How did you happen to think of it? You could do something with that. You ought to work it up and get a model made."

Roger's eyes shone. A real inventor! Oh, if he could be, perhaps then his grandfather would bestow a little love upon him, take a little pride in him! For, although no one knew it, the boy hungered for a recognition from his grandfather. He longed to stir a responsive chord, to awaken some of that affection which he knew had existed for his father; and after this talk with Mr. Karl, a lion humor prevailed which was the

first of its kind exhibited since the removal of the family from the country.

"Roger's growls are very deep," Helen whispered to her sister. "Why is he so savage, Barby?"

Barbara shook her head. "I don't see any reason for it," she said. "Perhaps something has gone wrong at school."

Barbara had lately come to know that her brother was rarely in the house till nearly eleven o'clock at night, and she had begun to worry over the matter, but had refrained from speaking to any one about it, and now that his lion mood was upon him, did not dare to question him.

"Oh, if I only knew," she said to herself. "This great, big, wicked city, and every one around talking of its temptations. I don't want to worry grandfather about it, and it would only make Boggie defiant if he thought grandfather disapproved." And the little sister lay awake nights to listen for her brother's step on the stair, turning over in her mind, meanwhile, different means for finding out where Roger spent his evenings. Finally she decided that when Mr. Karl next came home she would consult him upon the subject.

She was lying in bed with these thoughts one night. The clock had struck eleven, twelve, and Roger had not come in. "He is later than ever," thought Barbara, but presently she heard him shut his door, and the bright light shining through the crack showed him to be up an hour later.

Whether Mr. Palmer knew or noticed his grandson's proceedings Barbara did not know. Being, at

the best, much preoccupied, and just now in this new and congenial atmosphere, wrapped up more than ever in his music, it is probable, if he gave Roger a thought, that he supposed him to be in his room studying his lessons, for the boy had always kept much to himself.

It was Frau Blumenbach who broached the subject to Barbara. Good, kindly, motherly woman that she was, she could not fail to be concerned in these young people.

"Brodder come in britty lade," she said. "He is radder yong to be owet so lade, ain'd it? Do grandfadder know so?"

Barbara shook her head. "Oh, mutterkin, I am so worried," she replied, now relieved to know that some one beside herself was interested. "I don't think Roger is really doing anything wrong, but I don't know what company he keeps, and he won't talk, you know."

"No, he is got sometings on de mind," Mrs. Blumenbach remarked, reflectively. "He is sdrange poy, he is not lige my Karl."

"No, he isn't like any one but himself," returned Barbara.

"Do grandfadder spik mit him?"

"No, grandfather must not know; it would only worry him and make Roger do worse if he is doing wrong. I'll try and find out myself, or get Herr Karl to, if he will."

"You waid till Karl kome, he mage it all righdt," assented Mrs. Blumenbach, cheerfully.

However, it was not Herr Karl who solved the mystery for Barbara, but no one more nor less than Ike Keller, the butcher's boy.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT ROGER WAS DOING

IN Roger's good humors he jestingly called Ike "Barbara's henchman," and laughed at his devotion to her interests. Since their removal from the flat Barbara had seldom seen the boy, and the poor fellow had really missed her gentle influence. A few chance words of hers had given him a resolve which he sturdily carried out, and which the girl little dreamed would make the turning-point in the lad's life. Barbara had a natural courtesy of manner, and although she had not not had much to say to Ike, beyond discussing the quality of meat and vegetables, one day when he excused his neglect in filling an order by saying that he could not write, Barbara gently told him he ought to be ashamed of himself.

"A great boy like you wasting your time," she said. "Why don't you go to school at night and learn? You might become a nice smart man that any one could respect if you'd take the trouble."

Ike looked shamefacedly down on the floor, and shifted his feet. "What do you do in the evening?" Barbara continued.

"Oh, I knock about with the boys," Ike answered, uneasily, being ashamed to tell just what he did. "Will you respect me if I go to school?" he asked, as Barbara's silence showed her disapproval.

"Much more than I do now," she replied.

"Then I'll go," Ike declared, catching up his basket. And that was the last time Barbara had seen Ike, for not long after came the removal to the Blumenbachs'.

But one day when she had been to see Mrs. Gardner, Barbara met her henchman on the stairs. His rosy face beamed as he caught sight of the one friend who had taken the trouble to point him to higher standards. "I go to the Cooper Institute, Miss Barbara," he said, eagerly. "I'm learnin'."

"I'm very glad," replied Barbara. "That's a nice thing to hear."

"I see your brother going in there every night to one of the classes," Ike continued. "I thought maybe he'd see me and tell you."

"No," Barbara answered, "he has never spoken of seeing you. Keep on, Ike. I am so pleased to hear that you are doing well, and I hope you'll work hard."

"I'm goin' to," said Ike, pleased at the encouragement. "I ain't always goin' to be ignernt."

Barbara smiled and nodded good-by, but she thought little of Ike as she took her way home; it was of Roger. Dear old Boggie, she thought, that's what he has been doing. I'll venture to say he is studying something to help him know machinery. And she made haste to assure Mrs. Blumenbach that Roger's late hours were not due to bad influences, but to a real ambition.

"So-o?" said mutterkin, a smile on her pleasant face. "I like dot. I sink dot iss a fine poy." And her urbane manner toward Roger that evening quite surprised the moody lad.

He did not, however, reveal his intention to any one, and Barbara did not question him till after Mr. Karl

had come and Roger had begun to expand under his genial influence. It was hard now to find her brother alone: either he was at school, or with Mr. Karl; but one day, in the middle of the afternoon, when Barbara heard Roger go to his room, she thought she would go to him, and try to win back some of the confidence which of late he had withheld from her. "Grandfather and Mr. Blumenbach are absorbed in some queer old music, and I'll see what Roger is doing; he has been as still as a mouse in his room for ever so long," she said to herself.

She knocked at his door, and then, fancying that she heard a reply, she went in. Roger started up quickly from the table where he was sitting, and flushed as he saw himself discovered.

"What are you doing, Roger?" Barbara asked, curiously. "Oh, what is that? May I look?" Roger stood aside, but neither invited nor denied her an examination of a small machine on the table. "Why, Boggie, what is it? Did you do it? Tell me about it. Oh, you smart boy! How clever you are!" And Roger, unable to resist the sympathy, proceeded to explain his invention, and to tell of his studies at the Cooper Institute.

"And, oh, Barbara," he said, "if I only had the money I could have a model made, and maybe, maybe it would be a real invention. Mr. Karl says it is all right."

"How fine! How fine! Why don't you ask grandpa? I believe he would help you if he knew how real it is."

"Ask grandfather? Never! I'd die first."

"Why, Roger?"

"I would. I'll never ask him. He will have to find out for himself. I know he thinks me a surly, ugly clodhopper. He is half ashamed of me. I know, I know it," the boy said, passionately. "If I were to go and get a lute with a blue ribbon, and were to stick a rose in my buttonhole, and play little old tunes, he'd think I was all right, but he thinks I am a boor, and—let him think so."

"Why, Roger!" protestingly came again from Barbara. But she saw that there was a little truth in what Roger said, and that if he had been more like his winning, debonair father, he might have found greater favor in his grandfather's eyes.

"Never mind, Boggie," she said, after a pause, "your little red-headed sissy doesn't think so. She's proud of you. Do you know, Roger, maybe some way will come if we do our best to make it."

"What can we do?"

"Work with all our might for what we want, and ask the good Lord to help us to get it. I'll do my best."

"I believe you," said Roger. "Thank you, Bab," he said, a little awkwardly. "I thought you'd kind of gone back on me lately."

"Did you? Oh, Boggie!" And there was self-reproach in her tone, for she knew that she had been so self-absorbed as to have given less heed than usual to her brother. But the result of this talk did not show at once, although it did not fail in effect, as was seen later.

The winter had fairly set in when the first snow

arrived. It was quite deep for an early storm, and Helen came scampering home from school covered with snow-flakes. But the next morning when she ran to the window to look out, Barbara heard herself called: "Sister, come here. There's something so queer. The yard is full of snow, and there isn't a bit in the streets. Where has it gone? It couldn't have melted."

"It is mysterious," Barbara acknowledged. "See, it is in the side street, but there is none on the avenue."

A clearing up of the mystery was made at the breakfast table, amid hearty laughter from Herr Blumenbach. "You haf gom agross a meestery, eh? Vell, I show you dose meestery. It is oudt dere now veurking. Come, I show you." And he led Helen to the window to show her a force of men shovelling the snow rapidly into carts. "Dat's how dey reed demselufs of snow in *New Yurk*," he said. "You haf leurn somet'ings already dis morning, eh?"

"Oh!" said Helen.

The old man tossed back his curling gray locks and laughed merrily. "She say, 'Oh!' mudder," he remarked to his wife. "Dat is all she say: 'Oh!'" And he laughed again, as if Helen's exclamation showed wit by its brevity, if not by its brilliancy.

It was an easy matter for Barbara to get to her classes, and she enjoyed her daily ride on the Elevated road, whose cars thundered so close to some of the windows along the route that the passengers could see into the apartment houses, and Barbara thanked her stars that she did not live in any of them. Her work was her delight and she was expanding in every direc-

tion under the influences about her. She had not as yet made any close friendships. Kind old Frau Blumenbach and Mrs. Gardner were her confidants and advisors. "It seems just as if I had a big sister and a grandmother," she told them. But at the art school she was shy and opened her heart to no one, although she absorbed more than the girls gave her credit for doing. She worked diligently, and on the whole no better place could have been found for the special development which she needed. She soon showed what close application and persevering, painstaking work could achieve, for she was able to enter the Antique class by the end of the year, and held her own with those who had studied longer.

It was not till Christmas time that Helen made up her mind that the city might hold delights which the country could not offer.

"Oh, sister, you should see the beautiful windows on Fourteenth Street," she said, one afternoon. "They are fine. There are such wonderful things in them: a real 'Night before Christmas,' with Santa Claus and the children 'snug in their beds.' I wish you'd come and see it. Won't you?"

"Why yes, I should like to very much," Barbara replied.

"What are we going to do about Christmas, anyhow?" said Helen. "Oh, Barby, I see so many lovely things that I want for you. Do you believe we shall have a good time? It is always so Christmassy in the country, with the crowfoot and the holly and the nice piney smell of the Christmas-trees. Don't you remember how we used to go out and get whole piles of green

and dress up the house? I think grandpa used to like to have us do it. What can we do this year?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Barbara answered, thoughtfully. "We shall have to think of something real Christmas-like. Come, let's go now and see the shops."

But on their way home Barbara was very thoughtful, and her little sister asked why. "I was thinking of the poor little children who will have nothing," said Barbara. "Oh, Helen, there are so many of them, and we never used to see any at all in the country. Don't you remember last Sunday what Mrs. Gardner said about giving?"

"But we have so little to spend," returned Helen, looking sober.

Barbara's thoughts were busy, and presently she broke out with, "Oh, Helen, I know what we can do, and it will cost hardly anything. I'll make a whole lot of paper-dolls, and we will buy some penny dolls too, and a lot of penny toys; then we'll beg a lot of little boxes at the stores where they throw them out, and those we will fill. If you have any money to spend on me, don't do it, or else," she said laughing, "get me a Christmas-present of all the penny dolls your money will buy, and we'll dress them. It will be real fun."

Helen looked disappointed for a moment. "I was going to buy you something real pretty," she said. "I have fifty cents for Christmas, and I had planned it out just what I was going to do with it? Must I give it all, Barby?"

"No-o, I think half will be enough. We can do ever so much with twenty-five cents."

"But who will we give them to?"

"I have a plan, and I think I can carry it out if some one will help me." And therefore, during the intervening days between this time and Christmas, the two girls spent every moment they had to spare in filling their little boxes, which they had no difficulty in getting, and they were surprised to find how much of a show their small outlay could make, for, upon counting their boxes, they found a hundred. Their secret leaking out, numerous contributions came, so that they were kept busy enough in getting their small gifts ready.

Half of the boxes were for boys, half for girls. Those for the boys contained a little bag of marbles, a lead-pencil, and a little picture-book made by stitching a few leaves together and pasting in a few bright pictures. For the girls were provided boxes of like size, each containing a paper-doll, or one of the small penny ones, a little fancy box made bright by gilt paint and pictures, and holding a spool of cotton, a few needles, and a cheap thimble; then, for both boys and girls, came a bag or a cornucopia of candy, this being Herr Blumenbach's contribution, and to it the good Frau added little cakes, so that on Christmas-eve the girls were as much excited over the distributing of these results of their labors as over their own Christmas-gifts. There was, however, one thing which rather daunted them when they considered their undertaking, and that was, how were they to carry this big lot of things which so far exceeded their original intention?

CHAPTER VII

WHO CARRIED THE BOXES

HELEN need not have been doubtful as to the jollity of a Christmas spent in a German household, and she was in such a state of excitement over the tricks and jokes which Herr Blumenbach devised that she actually declared that no Christmas in the country had ever been so pleasant.

It was very funny to unwrap a large, long package and find in the very middle, carefully inclosed in cotton, a common slate-pencil; to see Barbara open envelope after envelope containing much-worn gloves, at last coming upon the one that held the new pair she much desired; to find deposited in a large box of excelsior a tiny package containing a Jordan almond; to see Roger look taken aback at finding in a satin-lined case a common hand-scrub brush, which suggested a use to which it might frequently be applied with good effect, for Roger's hands were not always as clean as they might be; to see roll out of an insignificant newspaper package the very pocket-book, with its pretty silver corners, that Helen had so much desired for her sister.

And then the good things, and the Christmas-tree, which was a surprise to every one except the old couple; and the pie served for dinner, which when cut was found to contain gifts instead of blackbirds. Even Mr. Palmer was moved to make jocular re-

marks, and went around with a pleased look on his face. And when Mr. Karl unexpectedly appeared, laden with gifts for every one, just at the time when they had all given up looking for him, it made the crowning jolity of the day.

"And now, sister," said Helen, when, dinner over, they made ready to carry out their plan of distributing the little boxes, "how are we to manage? Where are we going? and—what?"

Barbara gave a little gleeful laugh. "I haven't told you, on purpose, because I wanted to surprise you," she said. "You know every one has supposed these were for the mission school, but they are not. I wanted to have the experience of our giving them ourselves, and I knew there were lots of children who never go to mission schools, and those are the ones I want to find. Well, I puzzled and puzzled over it, and—who do you think settled it all for me?"

"I don't know,—Herr Karl?"

Barbara shook her head.

"Roger, then?"

"No. Ike Keller."

Helen slapped her hands in amusement. "How funny! Tell me."

"Well, you know I asked him about getting the nuts for us—and do you know, Helen, I believe he paid for half of them? for there were twice as many as I ordered. You know we didn't have money enough left to get many. Well, while I was bargaining about the nuts it popped into my head that Ike would be just the boy to help us. He knows New York just like a book, and can tell us just where the poorest

people live, and how to get our boxes to them and all. And do you know, he offered to carry them himself, and he is coming around with his big basket to put them in, and will go with us. Isn't it real good of him?"

"Real good," assented Helen.

"He tried to discourage us from going to the very poor streets, at first, but after a while he gave in, for he saw just what I wanted to do."

So, Helen, with Barbara and her henchman, set out to the satisfaction of all three. Ike, with a basket on each arm,—“the girl basket and the boy basket,” Helen called them. Into the narrow courts, the stived-up streets, they went; crowded miserable tenements confronted them on every side; starved, wretched children stared at them curiously; harsh voices grated upon their ears.

“Have you had a Christmas-gift?” was Barbara’s question put to a little crippled child who sat upon the curbstone watching a crowd of other children playing in the gutter.

“Wot’s Christmas?” he asked.

“Did you never hear of Christmas?” exclaimed Helen, in surprise, but Barbara handed out one of her boxes and said, gently, “Here is a Christmas-gift for you.”

Right and left the little ones crowded around. Most of them, eager for the goodies, did not appreciate the boxes and cornucopias which held the sweet things, but tore them ruthlessly asunder with grimy fingers clutching for the dainties. One even looked with an utter lack of recognition upon a pretty paper-doll, and

tore it to bits in a way which hurt Helen's sense of what was proper. "You mustn't do that," she said, quickly. And the child dropped the pieces and fled with a suspicious look over her shoulder. But there were some whose beaming faces showed their delight in the small receptacles, and who did not even offer to untie the ribbons which held the covers in place; gazing admiringly at the fancy little affairs, they smiled up in rapture at these givers of surprises.

Coarse, red-faced women gathered around seriously, and finding that something was being given away, each ran down her neighbor and begged to be noticed. "Come in to my people," said one, "that woman's children have scarlet fever."

"No, don't you go," whispered another. "She isn't fit for folks to visit." And Barbara turned to her stout henchman in bewilderment. But Ike displayed much judgment, and distributed the boxes where he seemed to know they would be best appreciated.

At last the final gift was bestowed, and the two girls were glad to escape from the foul street. "I am afraid," said Barbara, "that I should never have had the courage to come alone, if I had known how bad it was. And I should have been completely at sea without you, Ike. I am so much obliged to you."

Ike's face showed his intense satisfaction. "I wouldn't have missed it for nothin'," he made reply. "I'll take the job every year, Miss Barbara, if you want me. It does a fellow good to git into such places oncet in a while, when he's goin' in for the right kind of business. I ain't never done nothin' of this kind

before, but I'm blest if I don't kinder like it. How much d'ye say that there layout cost ye?"

"Oh, scarcely anything. We made most everything. Then Mrs. Blumenbach gave the cakes, Mr. Blumenbach the candies, and some one else half the nuts," she added shyly.

Ike's round face was suffused with a fuller crimson as he saw she had fathomed his secret. "Caught on to my little game, didn't ye?" he said. "Well, it wa'n't anything; I'll do better next year." And, leaving his charges at the corner, he disappeared with his empty baskets, a boy in whom one little country girl had aroused great possibilities by her quick sympathies and the ingenuous, free expression of them.

"Such a fine Christmas! Oh, sister, I'm the thankfullest creature you ever saw," said Helen, as Barbara tucked her in bed that night.

And in a narrow court one hundred little hearts also had an indistinct perception of gratitude at the recollection of the gifts which had so unexpectedly come to them, although the Christmas meaning hidden in them was invisible. But the word lingered, and some day who can tell what fruit might ripen from the seed?

The rest of the winter passed rapidly, and the spring brought to Barbara a possibility of which she had never dreamed as coming through her studies at the art school. And not even to Roger did she say one word of the faint little hope which was born in the blossom time of spring.

There was a great scraping of chairs and stools, with the occasional clatter of a drawing-board falling

clumsily upon the bare floor from the collapse of an easel.

It was the beginning of the hour set aside for the afternoon antique class, and an announcement just made had set the twenty-five girl students in a quiver of excitement.

They were all on pretty good terms with one another, and while some were merely triflers, the majority were really interested in their work and had great visions of the wonderful pictures to be painted by and by, when the difficulties of proportion and values, technique and perspective were overcome.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I feel so helpless," said pretty Madge Delorme. "Imagine what that blank piece of paper ought to represent, girls. One hundred dollars! Think of it! for that is what the prize-drawing will win. I feel weak in the knees already." And Madge turned her shapely little head to one side in a picturesque pose for the benefit of the rest of the class.

"I haven't a thumb-tack left! Do, somebody, lend me some!" cried Isabel Bromley. "I never knew anything so utterly unreliable as thumb-tacks; mine disappear in the most mysterious way. I believe if I bought them by the gross I should still be without when I needed them."

"Thumb-tacks are common property, you know," returned Barbara. "Here, Miss Bromley; I have four extra ones. Will that be enough?"

"Oh, you good child!" replied Isabel. "To-morrow I shall lay in a big supply; this is too serious an occasion to run the risk of having your nerves shattered

for want of appliances. Hurry up, girls, and choose your places."

For the next thirty minutes there was solemn attention visible upon the faces of the group of girls. This was the yearly competition, and meant a great deal to at least two of the class. This year a prize of one hundred dollars had been offered for the best drawing made by a member of the antique class, and twenty hearts beat high with hope, although most of the girls acknowledged that there were formidable rivals in tall, handsome Isabel Bromley and little Barbara Palmer. These two girls had worked like beavers the whole year. Isabel had a nice, artistic touch, but, it must be confessed, was not always so strong in her drawing as Barbara. To the former the prize meant the consent of her parents to continue her studies at the Academy; to the latter it meant the money for Roger's model.

"You are the most incomprehensible girl," Mrs. Bromley had said to her daughter. "You don't need a profession, and how you can like to spend your time with that dirty, black charcoal soiling your hands, or with paints and turpentine forever in your nostrils, I cannot see. You can have invitations to any house you choose, and yet since you have left school you are as much of a stay-at-home as you were before. I did hope to see you shine in society."

Isabel gave a long sigh. "Oh, I love to work! I love it, mamma," she said. "You don't know how much more it is to me than anything else."

"Well," returned Mrs. Bromley, "your father thinks you are wasting your time. He thinks to give

every day for two years is quite enough to allow you. I don't see that you have anything to show for it but a lot of stupid-looking charcoal figures and a few ugly earthen pots and bottles, so very uninteresting in color. Now, if you could paint our portraits, it would be worth while. Your father thinks you ought to have been ready long ago for that if you had any talent."

Isabel clasped her hands tightly. "Oh, if I could only make you see!" she exclaimed hopelessly. "I will promise to do my very best, mamma; and if I can convince papa that it is my career, you will not oppose, will you, mamma?"

"Come here, Miss Palmer, and look at my drawing," said Isabel. "You know we may criticise each other, even if Mr. Adams doesn't come near us."

Barbara responded by going over and silently regarding Isabel's work. It was good, very good,—strong, vigorous massing and well-studied proportion; but Barbara's critical eye saw that the figure did not stand squarely. She could praise sincerely, and yet to give the criticism which would be helpful meant, perhaps, the loss of the prize to herself. But she did not hesitate long.

"Take a line down the figure," Miss Bromley," she said, "and see if it does not fall outside the heel."

"Of course it does," returned Isabel, after following the suggestion. "Thank you so much. You have saved me, I do believe," and she flashed a smile at the other, who returned to her easel.

At the end of the three hours which closed the day's work Barbara took another look at Isabel's work. "If

you keep on you will make the best thing you have ever done," she said, slowly.

Isabel looked up rapturously. "Oh, if I do! if I do!—it means so much! I am trying as I never tried before."

Then Barbara went to her own easel, standing before it in silent contemplation. Her drawing was correct in line, squarely and firmly done, but it missed the breadth and freedom of Isabel's, and the girl's heart sank as she took down her board and set it against the wall.

"We are to leave everything, girls," informed Isabel. "This room is not to be entered by any of us except during the hours of the concours, Mr. Adams says. So lock the door after you, whoever is the last one, and take the key to Mr. Adams."

The next afternoon Isabel produced four large thumb-tacks, painted a brilliant red. These she proceeded to place securely in the corners of her paper. "There!" she exclaimed; "I'd like to see any one cribbage my thumb-tacks now without my finding it out. One of those you lent me yesterday, Miss Palmer, has disappeared, so I'll have to replace it with one of a different size. I shall not lose these easily, however. They are painted with my very brightest vermilion."

"Happy thought, Isabel," said Madge Delorme, stepping back from her easel and surveying Isabel's staring red tacks. "My! what a stunning drawing you are making! there is no chance for poor me; in fact, I shouldn't wonder but that you had distanced us all."

"That's for the committee to say," returned Isabel.

"You know it is proverbial that committees and students do not agree as to the merits of school work."

"There is some consolation in that," agreed Madge. "I may develop some hitherto unknown quality of work which will strike the critical eyes of the wise six, or I'll chirk up and go at it again."

CHAPTER VIII

SUSPICIONS

ANOTHER afternoon of hard, persistent endeavor passed away, and the girls, with cheerful chatter, vacated the room. "Don't forget to lock the door, Miss Palmer," called Madge, for the former had dropped her box of charcoal near the door, and was stopping to pick it up.

Isabel had gone on, and was washing her hands in the lavatory when Barbara came in.

"I beat you this time," said Isabel, gayly; "you're always ahead of me."

"I had to gather up my charcoal," replied Barbara, laying the key of the locked room upon the marble slab.

"Don't forget the key," called Isabel, as Barbara turned away to get her wraps. "You are 'discombobolated' these days, aren't you?"

"No wonder," returned Barbara, possessing herself of the key; "I think prize contests the most dreadful upsetting things in the world. I can neither eat nor sleep."

"Does it mean so much?" asked Isabel. Barbara flushed, and Isabel went on: "It means everything to me. My parents cannot see why. They say I am getting cranky and queer, and they long to see me a society doll. They say I ought to maintain my position; that I neglect my duties. Such duties! Going

to dress-makers and doing vapid, senseless things. They do not know to what my study helps me. Why, Mr. Adams's talks have expanded my views beyond anything I ever dreamed. They are enough in themselves to ennoble us, and make us see the beauty of honor, and truth, and integrity. Besides, what an insight we gain into the world of nature! Oh, I could not bear to give it up."

"I'm so glad you feel so, too," replied Barbara, regarding the older girl admiringly. "Isn't it a wonderful world to live in?"

"Well, we stand an even chance as far as the prize is concerned," said Isabel. "Good-by; I'll try not to envy you too much if you happen to be the lucky one;" and, picking up her hat, she left the room.

There was quite a hubbub in the class-room when Barbara entered the next afternoon. The girls were gathered around Isabel, ah-ing and oh-ing in tones of dismay and sympathy.

"Isn't this dreadful!" exclaimed Madge Delorme, and Barbara, looking over her shoulder, saw the cause of the disturbance. Isabel's drawing, partly erased, showed a cut as of a pin or a tack down through the middle.

"Oh!" exclaimed Barbara, "what a pity! and it was so good."

Isabel stood, a lump in her throat and a suspicion of tears in her dark eyes.

"You'll have to do it all over," said Madge; "and you had such a fine start."

"Perhaps we can still do something with it," said Barbara.

"What! How can anything be done with it?" asked Isabel, helplessly.

Barbara was examining it carefully. "I think, perhaps, if we take off the paper without rubbing it any more than we can help, and paste a strip down the back where the cut comes, it might remedy it. You see, the cut hardly touches the figure, and even if it wrinkles on the side, it will not take away from the merit of the drawing."

"I am afraid it is hopeless," returned Isabel.

"Well, it will do no harm to try," Barbara replied, cheerfully.

"Go to work, girls; don't waste your time on me," said Isabel to the others, and they dispersed.

"I cannot imagine how it happened," Isabel went on. "I left it standing safely against the wall, and this afternoon I found that it had been disturbed, for——" Here she stopped short in her chatter, her eyes snapped angrily, and she caught the board from Barbara's hand. "I am keeping you from your work," she said, with a haughty change of manner. "I shall not attempt to mend this; I prefer to make a new drawing. I don't need your assistance."

Barbara was kneeling down in front of the easel carefully trying to brush away some of the superfluous marks which had gathered upon the drawing. She looked up wonderingly, but Isabel did not vouchsafe a glance in her direction, only walked away to get a fresh sheet of paper, and Barbara, turning very pale, took her own place. The other girls, working away steadily, did not notice this by-play, and their gay bantering and exclamatory talk went on as usual.

Immediately upon the close of the last hour Isabel hastily gathered up her belongings and left the room, her mutilated drawing in her hand. She went directly to the head instructor. "I want to show you something, Mr. Adams," she said. He looked up from his desk with a smile for this one of his favorite pupils, saying, "Well, Miss Bromley; something for me to criticise?"

"No, Mr. Adams. I want to show you what has happened in the antique room. You know the room is locked each day when we leave it. No one is supposed to go in there excepting ourselves, who are working in that class, and to-day I found my drawing in this state," and she extended it to him. Mr. Adams took the proffered paper and examined it carefully before he made any remark. Then he shook his head. "Too bad! too bad!" he said; "and you had a good beginning. I cannot account for the accident."

"I can," returned Isabel, with a set face.

Mr. Adams looked up quickly. "Why, my child, what do you mean?"

Isabel was silent a moment. "I do not believe in suspecting without proof," she returned, "and I am sorry to tell this—so very sorry. Still, I do not believe in shielding wrong-doers. Do you remember who locked the room yesterday?"

Mr. Adams was thoughtful for a short time. "Miss Palmer brought me the key," he acknowledged, with marked unwillingness.

"She was the last one in the room. We generally leave in a body, but she stopped to pick up her box of

charcoal, which she dropped—no doubt with a purpose.”

“Take care,” interrupted Mr. Adams.

“Oh, don’t imagine I make my charges without proof,” cried Isabel, warmly, with a new sense of her injury. “I should never have dreamed of such a thing. I should have defended Miss Palmer to the last; but there were four thumb-tacks which fastened my drawing to the board. These I had painted bright red, to prevent their being taken or lost—you know, no one must appropriate a thumb-tack found on the floor. I left mine securely fastened in my drawing, and to-day one was missing. Then, when Miss Palmer was kneeling in front of my easel, I saw my red thumb-tack embedded in the heel of her shoe. It must have been there from the day before, for it was rubbed as if some of the paint had worn off in walking.”

Mr. Adams looked distressed. “This is very serious,” he admitted. “We will make further investigations, Miss Bromley. Poor little girl! Poor little girl! there must be some mistake.”

“I wish I could think so,” returned Isabel. “Could you not simply withdraw her work, yourself?”

“No; for I am not on the committee. The drawings go in without my having seen them. I wish this sad affair had not happened. I am greatly interested in Miss Palmer. I fancy no one among you is more thoroughly in earnest, and she has marked talent.”

“Well,” concluded Isabel, rising, “we will let it rest for the present, Mr. Adams, but I thought you ought to know it. I scorn hypocrisy.” And she left

the instructor with a dignified step and with her head in the air.

In the hall Isabel passed Barbara, but, save for a loftier fling of the head and a lowering of the lids over her eyes, it was as if she had not seen her fellow-student.

True to her determination, Isabel worked as she had never worked before, and felt that her second attempt was, if anything, better than her first. On the last afternoon of the "concours" she found a red thumb-tack fastened on her board in a conspicuous place. She glanced quickly at Barbara, who had in these few days made no attempt to win her attention, but the little student was working away and never once looked toward her.

"I don't care how faithful she is, it does not excuse her dishonor," thought Isabel.

But the thought had hardly crossed her mind before one of the girls in a distant corner cried out, "Oh, who has lost a red thumb-tack? I have just found one over here."

"Not I," responded Isabel, "I have all four of mine."

"No, you haven't," said Madge Delorme, turning toward her laughingly.

Isabel turned quickly. "What do you mean?" she said, dropping her charcoal and going over to the girl. "Why, Madge, I didn't know you had red thumb-tacks too; it is yours, then."

"No, it is not," responded Madge; "although you haven't a copyright on red thumb-tacks. I painted mine the very day you did. I thought it was a good

scheme, and I told the girls it would be a joke on you. But, to pay me for it, I upset my box in the hall coming from the other room, and away went one of my tacks, no one knows where."

"Then where did that one come from that I found sticking in my drawing-board this afternoon?" exclaimed Isabel, her eyes seeking Barbara.

One glance from the girl caused Isabel to move swiftly toward her. "Tell me," she cried, bending down, "tell me, Miss Palmer, did you put that thumb-tack in my board?" and she laid her hand imperiously on Barbara's shoulder.

"I thought it was yours," was Barbara's reply, given in a low voice.

Isabel raised herself to her full height and looked around the room. There was intense excitement visible upon her face. "Girls!" she cried, "it may seem like a little thing, but I must fathom the mystery of those thumb-tacks. Has any one else besides Madge and myself red thumb-tacks?"

"No, no!" came from all sides.

"And you lost yours on the second day of the competition in the hall, on your way from the other room?"

"Yes, Miss Portia; I lost it in the hall."

"Where did you find the one you put in my board, Miss Palmer?" asked Isabel, turning to Barbara, who had risen to her feet.

"In the heel of my shoe," answered she.

"Then it is mine; you must have picked it up in the hall," exclaimed Madge, "for the one Isabel lost was lost in this room, and has just now been picked up."

Give it to me, Isabel. Here, Elsie Jordan, give the thumb-tack you have just found to Isabel Bromley; it isn't half as good as mine, I know, even if Miss Palmer has walked the paint nearly off. I want my own dear red thumb-tack back, so I do;" and Madge merrily held out her hand for the tack, which Isabel disengaged from the board and gave her.

For the rest of the afternoon Isabel's brain was in a whirl. Perhaps, after all, Barbara had never touched her work. There was only left the fact of the key. Her real proof had fallen through. A second time she sought Mr. Adams.

"Oh, Mr. Adams," she exclaimed, without waiting for preliminaries, "it wasn't my thumb-tack, after all, which was in the heel of Miss Palmer's shoe; it was Madge Delorme's." And she proceeded to explain.

"Then the mystery is entirely cleared," returned Mr. Adams. "I was going to find you to tell you of a discovery I made to-day. Some time ago I told the janitor, Mike, to hang some casts which had just arrived in the larger room. Mike, finding that there was scarcely room for them all, took it upon himself to hang one in the antique room. He has duplicate keys, and can have access, of course, to all the rooms. It seems that he hung the cast by a piece of wire. Finding it too short, he eked it out, Paddylike, with a bit of twine, which, in the course of time, broke, as any one else would know it was likely to do. The cast, falling to the ground, knocked over your board, which stood under it, and a piece of the broken plaster made the cut in your paper. I only to-day learned the facts from Mike, for he has been home sick with the grippe,

and the man who took his place, when he cleared away the broken pieces, did not tell me. So poor Mike is the culprit through his stupidity, and little Miss Palmer is entirely innocent."

The tears were standing in Isabel's eyes. "Oh, the poor little dear! How glad I am! Oh, Mr. Adams, you don't know how horrid I have been to her; how I have been despising her, and treating her as if she were a worm of the dust, and now I feel like a worm of the dust myself. What can I do to make it up to her? She will think me such a silly, whimsical, flighty creature, as changeable as the wind, if I venture to make overtures now. What can I do?"

"You can do as you would be done by," said Mr. Adams, smiling. "That will answer the difficulty."

"But if I were countrified, and shy, and sensitive. Oh, what can I do? If I should take the prize, do you believe she would resent my giving the money to her? It is only the honor I care for."

"If you gave it as a queen bestows a largess, no."

"How then?"

"As our good gifts often come to us, silently."

Isabel looked up, a flash of appreciation coming into her eyes. "I know now. You will help me, Mr. Adams. Oh, I deserve to humble myself for my arrogance to that poor child. You will help me, Mr. Adams?"

He gave assent and they parted.

There was great excitement in the reception room of the art school. The girls had been there all day tacking up drawings and studies, decorating the cor-

ners with draperies and happy bits of color, till the place presented a delightfully artistic harmony of design.

Now the little company was gathered together. Isabel appeared, looking really handsome in shimmering silk and creamy lace. Her parents were with her—for some of Mr. Bromley's friends were among the committee, and he was persuaded that it was a sufficiently important occasion for him to lend his aristocratic presence to the reception. Madge Delorme was there in a quaint, soft gown, her bronze hair piled high on her little head, and her white neck made whiter still by the string of curious beads about her throat. Barbara Palmer, in a rather shabby blue gown, her eyes bigger and her face paler than usual, shrank away in a corner, where, with hands tightly clasped, she waited for the announcement which should mean so much to her and Roger. She had told no one of the possibility which the day might bring, and had not asked even Mrs. Gardner to be present at the awarding of the prize. She felt that she could not face failure with her friends present. "I have worked, and asked, and believed," she kept telling herself. "Is it for nothing?"

Seeing her in the corner, Isabel went over to her. It had not been easy to win back Barbara's confidence, which had begun to open toward this bright, handsome girl, but Isabel was not to be set aside when she had taken a determination, and Barbara smiled a greeting.

"We are comrades in misery," Isabel whispered. "I am so excited I can hardly see anybody or anything. Won't you share my violets with me?" and

she dropped a fragrant bunch into Barbara's lap. "They remind me of you," she added.

Barbara raised her eyes gratefully, and held the flowers to her face, without saying anything, for the critical moment had arrived.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRIZE

AND now there came a sudden hush. Mr. Adams, stepping forward, claimed attention. Behind him sat a row of dignified-looking men,—the committee; august personages, in the eyes of the student. There was first a little address, with the usual humorous allusions and facetious tendencies. Then Mr. Adams said, "I am asked to announce the decision of the committee regarding the prize of a hundred dollars, so generously offered this year by Mr. Henry Warwick. It is the conclusion of the committee, all points of merit being considered, that the drawing of Miss——." Here Isabel took Barbara's hand in a firm clasp; both girls were trembling. "Miss Isabel Bromley," Mr. Adams went on, "is the most deserving."

There was a great murmur of applause. Madge Delorme craned her lily neck to catch sight of Isabel, but the latter did not see any one. Her eyes were downcast, and she still held the hand of Barbara. Neither did Barbara, whose face was hidden in the violets, look up.

Mr. Adams cleared his throat. "It is my pleasant duty to announce further," he continued, "that a second prize of equal value, one hundred dollars, is offered for the second best drawing from the antique. This prize is given by a friend of the school, who wishes to remain unknown, and it has been found by the com-

mittee to be most worthily won by Miss Barbara Palmer."

The violets which Barbara lowered from her face held two shining tears, and two more sparkling drops lay in the heart of those which rested in Isabel's lap.

"Oh, you sly puss!" exclaimed the much-pleased Mr. Bromley, when his daughter lifted her radiant face to his. "If these old friends of mine can see so much talent in your work, I shall be obliged to give in. Go ahead with your studies, daughter, as long as you like."

"How shall you spend your money, Isabel?" Madge Delorme asked. "I suppose you don't care a rap for the lucre. You'd rather have a little glory than a big check any day. I think you ought to give us girls a staving luncheon, anyhow, to make up for our disappointment."

"The money is spent already," laughed Isabel, "but you shall have the luncheon just the same."

"You extravagant girl! I might have known it. I'll venture to say you bought a picture."

Isabel shook her head. "Not exactly," she replied. Then her eyes met those of Mr. Adams, who had come up to offer his congratulations, and she saw in the good man's face the recognition of her best impulses, and, to hide her happiness, she turned away and went to find Barbara, who was surrounded by her friends. For Mr. Gardner was one of the committee, and, with his wife, had covered their little friend with congratulations, and were presenting this and that well-known artist to her till she felt as if she could not carry her honors. She begged that her family should not be told

just yet, "For," she said, "Roger and I have a secret." And the promise was given.

Isabel's bright face was brighter than ever as she caught sight of the Gardners. "Why," she exclaimed, "here I find my choicest spirits all flocking together. I didn't know you all knew each other. Aren't you proud, Dora, of having two such talented friends as Miss Palmer and myself? Really—but do not say this to papa—she should have had first honors, for she has not been studying so long as I; consequently she has made more progress."

"It was almost a tie between you," returned Mrs. Gardner, "so my husband says, and we are very proud of Barbara. She has done wonders in these short months."

"You cannot put me down in that way," laughed Isabel. "I am delightfully stuck up this evening, and feel like flaunting myself all I know how. Oh, you are going now? You will let me come and see you all very soon, won't you?" And with a bright smile and a warm hand-clasp Barbara parted from her rival.

Her one thought now was to reach Roger. "If I had only asked him to come home early," she said to herself as she mounted the stairs, after parting from her friends. But Roger had come home rather early, and Barbara, in response to his "Come in," stole up softly behind him and laid before his astonished eyes her crisp new hundred-dollar bill.

With a start Roger wheeled around in his chair. "Why, Bab! Why, Bab!" he stammered. "Oh, say, now, that's a mean joke. It's one of those advertisement things."

"No, it isn't," Barbara assured him. "It is just as much of a reality as possible. My prize money, fair sir." And she made him a sweeping courtesy.

"Your prize money! Why, Bab, what do you mean? Have you been fighting pirates, or what?"

Barbara laughed. "Now, isn't that just the way a boy's thoughts would run? No, sir. 'I've been an' done an' drawed a figger,' as Dibby would say. It is the second prize for the second best drawing from the antique at the art school. Oh, I was as much surprised as you. For no one dreamed there was to be any second prize, but there was, and it is mine. Now, Boggie, hurrah for the model of your machine! Didn't I say it would come?"

Roger was silent. Then he said, in a husky tone, "Do you suppose I am going to take it from you, Bab?"

Barbara's face fell. "Why, Roger, I thought you would be so glad to have it," she said.

Roger's eyes were bent on the floor. "I couldn't, Barby, I couldn't. Mother wouldn't want me to."

"Yes, she would," returned Barbara, eagerly. "I know she would. She would say we must help each other."

"Not that way."

Barbara looked distressed, but presently she brightened up. "I tell you, Boggie, what we can do. I'll lend it to you, if you won't take it as a free gift. Surely you'll not refuse to do that. No, please don't. Why, Roger, I tried so hard, all for you." And the tears began to roll down her cheeks, while the little sob in her voice was too much for Roger.

"There, don't cry, Barbara," he said. "You're awfully good. I will borrow it, then, and pay you back the first money I can earn."

"All right," returned Barbara, briskly. "Oh, Roger, I'm so happy." And bending over, she kissed her brother's forehead, a caress which did not bring a frown, for Roger, looking up, smiled and said,—

"You are my good angel, Barbara. You know how to tame the lion. Oh, by the way, I saw your henchman this evening. He is working away for dear life, and looked as sober as a judge when I saw him. I wonder what started him?"

A trembling little smile showed around Barbara's mouth.

"You did," cried Roger. "No one else could. Good for you, Bab!" Then he added, gravely, "if more people would take an interest in such boys, and talk to them the right way, there wouldn't be so many loafers."

"Never mind about Ike," returned Barbara. "I want to talk about your model."

Having once become convinced of Barbara's sincerity and innocence, Isabel could not do enough to make up for her former suspicion, and one Saturday shortly after this Helen came running to her sister, saying, "Oh, Barby, there is the most beautiful shiny carriage at the door, and such lovely, prancing horses, with jingling harness, all silver mounted, and such a stylish young lady has asked for you! Meta is bringing her card now."

The stout, pleasant-looking maid followed Helen,

her broad face beaming. She held out the card in her red fingers, "Gnädiges fräulein," she said, her very slight knowledge of English not doing justice to the occasion.

Barbara took the card and read "Miss Bromley." "Oh!" she exclaimed, "it is Isabel Bromley. She has come to see me." And feeling quite overcome by this evidence of Isabel's interest in her, Barbara went down to see her fellow-student.

Isabel greeted her warmly. "I've come to carry you off, if you'll go," she said. "I ought to have been more formal, but I can't bear formality, and I do so want you to come and spend the day with me. Can't you?" Barbara's ready color flushed her face. She shrank from an entrance into a stranger's home.

"I thought we could have such a good time," said Isabel. "You know I promised the girls a luncheon, and I should so like to have your help about it."

"Mine?" exclaimed Barbara, opening her eyes.

"Yes, you have lots of ideas, I know, and we can get up *menu* cards that will be unique. I'd so much rather do them myself, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know," replied Barbara, ingenuously; "I never even saw one."

Isabel laughed. "Oh, you're such a dear violet," she said. "I think you are too deliciously natural for anything. You'll soon discover what *menu* cards are, and I promise you we shall not be disturbed, for mamma is to be out all day."

This assurance gave Barbara the courage to accept, and in a few moments she was seated in the luxurious

carriage, bowling up Fifth Avenue, feeling quite as if she were living a fairy tale.

Suddenly the carriage came to a standstill, and Isabel, looking out to discover the cause, saw quite a crowd gathered. She learned from the driver why the way was blocked, and turned to Barbara with a pleased smile. "There is a parade coming," she informed her. "Don't you want to see it?"

"Oh, indeed I do," she replied. "I never saw one."

Isabel laughed. "Never saw a parade? How funny! I have been seeing them ever since I was big enough to be held up to a window to look out. There, don't you hear the band? I'll tell Parker to wait for us here; we can't see anything unless we get out. There, do you see that high stoop? We will go up there."

"How funny to hear door-steps called a stoop," said Barbara, in her turn finding something to surprise her. "I never heard them called so at home. I wonder why New Yorkers always use the word."

"I never thought much about it, but now you mention it I believe I have heard my uncle say that the word came from our old Dutch ancestors, and that it was originally spelled s-t-o-e-p. Yes, I remember, it was Uncle Van who told me. There, we'll have to squeeze through the crowd. Oh, my, what a jam! Don't let me lose you. Keep close to me. Oh, thank you, Mr. Mercer; we should like to have a less popular spot." And Barbara saw that her friend was speaking to a young man who had issued from the door-way of a shop which they were passing.

"Come right in, Miss Bromley," said Mr. Mercer,

"the front window up-stairs will afford you a good view." And passing through the shop, where obsequious clerks bowed right and left, Barbara found herself, presently, very comfortably settled in a chair in front of a large plate-glass window, from which a good view of the street could be obtained.

"How nice!" she whispered to Isabel. "Is the gentleman a friend of yours?"

Isabel looked amused. "In the sense of taking mamma's orders very carefully, but not in a social sense. We deal here, and Mr. Mercer is always polite to his customers." Barbara marked the haughty little air, and drew her own inference of what that same mamma must be.

"Oh," she said to herself, "I'm so glad I'm not to meet the aristocratic Mrs. Bromley. I can imagine just how she would look at me."

But her attention was here attracted by the approach of the parade, and for half an hour or more she was absorbed in gazing at the glittering array of marching troops and in listening to the martial music of the bands. "Oh, how I wish Roger were here," she said at last, with a sigh.

"I'll venture to say that Roger has seen a dozen parades," observed Isabel. "No boy of his age is going to stay in New York for six months without finding a chance at looking at some sort of a fine procession. There, Barbara, I think that is the ragtag and bobtail of it now. See, those are advertisements, that long string of wagons."

Barbara would like to have watched them, also, for the wagons, which, in some cases, bore fantastically

dressed men who threw printed handbills right and left, were as much of a curiosity to her as the parade had been. But she followed Isabel down-stairs to the front door, where Mr. Mercer bowed them out, and they found their carriage in waiting before the curb.

"You must see the coaching parade," said Isabel. "That will be new to you. All the coaches make a start out on a certain day in May, and it is quite a sight to see the gorgeous costumes the ladies wear. The world and his grandmother turns out to see them. I claim you for that day, remember, and will let you know when it is."

By this time they had drawn up with a dash before the door of Isabel's splendid home, and Barbara followed her friend up the broad steps, through the hall, where rich rugs and every evidence of wealth met her eyes.

"You don't mind going to the third floor, do you?" asked Isabel, turning around at the second flight of steps, which led to her rooms. "I must live where I can get light and air. Papa is so enthusiastic now over my late performance that he offers to build me a studio, but I like my own little work-room best." And she opened the door of a room which was the most beautiful Barbara had ever seen. Everything that wealth could offer to beautify the place was there. The dressing-table was filled with elegant silver toilet articles; the silken draperies, filmy lace curtains, soft chairs, and bits of bric-a-brac, with numberless little objects of interest such as girls love to have,—photographs and college programmes, dinner favors, and mementoes of summer outings and winter festivities,

—all these represented luxury such as Barbara had only read about.

“ You see I have a sunny bedroom,” said Isabel, “ but my studio has north windows, and we will work there. Take off your things, and we’ll have a cosey time all to ourselves.”

So, before long Barbara found herself ensconced before a table talking interestedly about the *menu* cards, and nibbling at dainty candies, a box of which stood upon the table.

In the midst of their work the dignified butler, who quite overawed Barbara by his magnificent livery, knocked at the door. “ Mr. Henry Vandermeer is here, Miss Isabel, and will stop to luncheon,” he announced.

Isabel looked disturbed. “ Oh, Barbara,” she said, “ I am so sorry my uncle has come to interrupt our cosiness. I thought we’d be all alone. You must try not to care. He is really very nice, and I’ll wind him up to talk of Mexico and South America, so you can listen if you don’t care to talk.”

And Barbara, feeling quite abashed at meeting a stranger, murmured some assurance, little knowing what she was to discover through this chance meeting.

CHAPTER X

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

To Barbara, who had never had an intimate friend, Isabel was a revelation; her little, imperious ways, her sudden meltings into tenderness, her graceful attentions, her sparkling wit, entirely captivated the little country girl, and she probably never spent a happier morning than this one. Although there were two years' difference in their ages, and unlike as were the lines of the two girls, there were certain points of contact they seemed to touch very often.

"You are such a dear," Isabel would cry, suddenly. "You have the dearest, childlike ways. Yet the minute I begin to feel that you are a baby you say something so wise and experienced that I feel as if the tables had turned, and it makes our friendship so spicy. I've been looking for you all my life. I wish I could remember exactly the day I met you, so I could mark it red on my calendar."

"I can tell you," said Barbara, blushing. "It was the fifteenth of November."

Isabel jumped from her chair, rushed for a calendar, and, dipping her brush in her color-box, gave a touch to the calendar, which she gayly held aloft, crying, "See my red-letter day!"

But the bright vermilion-hued figure suggested the red thumb-tacks, and the color mounted to Barbara's cheek as she remembered Isabel's scorn of her, the reason for which she had never been able to fathom.

The thought came to Isabel, too, and flinging down the calendar she was in a moment at Barbara's side, with her arms around her.

"You dear, transparent thing," she said, "I know just what you are thinking about, and I am going to confess how mean and suspicious I was before I knew how like a clear crystal you are."

And she made her confession, kneeling by Barbara's side.

"There, I feel better," she said in conclusion. "Please to forgive me."

She looked so handsome, so winning, that Barbara impulsively leaned over and kissed her, at which proceeding Isabel hugged her rapturously, and the seal of their friendship was set.

"I think *menu* cards are enticing," said Barbara, holding one off to view the effect. "I like that little verse so much. I am so glad to learn about these pretty things, and I have more ideas now than I know what to do with."

"You are coming to the luncheon, you know," returned Isabel. "We are going to have it at the art school. Mr. Adams says I may give it there, for, to tell you the truth, mamma is so queer. She has such ridiculous notions about the students, and says I am too democratic in my tastes. So I think we can have a nice, free-and-easy time at the school; for I don't want any of the girls to be made uneasy by my mother's dignity."

And Barbara quite agreed with her.

"You see," continued Isabel, "we are each to wear some quaint sort of a costume, and after the luncheon

we are to sketch each other. Then some one is to number the sketches, and whoever has a corresponding number on her *menu* card will have that sketch as a 'sovenoor,' as my nurse used to say, of the day."

"Oh, what a lovely idea!" exclaimed Barbara. "I think that is fine. When is it to be?"

"Oh, I don't know. As soon as these cards are ready, and before we all go out of town for the summer."

Barbara smiled at the matter-of-course way in which Isabel presupposed that every one went out of town.

"I don't expect to go out of town," she said. "I should like Helen to go, but I must stand by Boggie."

"Your brother?"

"Yes."

"I wish I had a brother, but suspect it is as well for the impossible brother that I haven't. I'm a selfish creature, I'm afraid."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't be," returned Barbara, earnestly. "Not if you knew your brother needed you."

Isabel shook her head. And here, luncheon being announced, Barbara arose with some trepidation, remembering she was to meet a stranger.

As she entered the dining-room, the hush of which was only broken by the clinking of ice in the glasses and the crackle of the open wood-fire, Barbara saw at first only the table, with its fine napery, delicate glass and china, and the solemn butler standing in state. But some one came forward from the bay-window and was presented as "My uncle, Mr. Vandermeer."

Barbara felt that she acknowledged the introduction

with little grace, and realized more fully than ever her lack of a knowledge of what she told herself were "society manners." She slid into her seat at the table feeling very awkward and constrained, hoping no attempt at conversation was expected of her.

However, Mr. Vandermeer's first words shattered her hopes, for, turning to her, he said,—

"Your name is a familiar one to me, Miss Palmer, although it is not an unusual one. I suppose you do not happen to be related to a Blake Palmer?"

Barbara looked up quickly. "That is my father's name," she replied.

"Is it possible?" Mr. Vandermeer regarded her keenly; then, dropping his eyes, he fixed them upon his plate, keeping silence for some time.

Isabel, in her capacity as hostess, made an effort to arouse him to his usual vivacity.

"When are you going to Mexico again, Uncle Henry?" she asked. "Barbara, he is a real 'globe trotter.' We can't keep him at home. I suppose by next week he'll be on his way to Patagonia. He has actually been in New York all winter, but I suppose, the spring being here, he will emigrate, as usual."

Mr. Vandermeer seemed scarcely to hear his niece.

"Do not think me curious, Miss Palmer," he said, "but have you always lived in New York?"

"Oh, no, we have not been here a year. We came from Maryland."

"And you were born there?"

Barbara named the village where she had first opened her infant eyes.

"Is your mother living?" asked Mr. Vandermeer.

"How you do catechize, Uncle Van!" put in Isabel, wondering at his interest in her friend.

"No," replied Barbara, "she died four years ago. We live with our grandfather."

"Oh, yes, your grandfather," repeated Mr. Vandermeer, thoughtfully. And all Isabel's bantering could not rouse him into the bright humor which she hoped would entertain them.

The luncheon was not gay, for Barbara was too timid to talk much, and only Isabel's own effort kept it from being a silent meal.

As they were leaving the table Mr. Vandermeer gravely asked Isabel if he might have a few words with Miss Palmer, and Barbara in agitation joined him in the library.

"Miss Palmer," began Mr. Vandermeer, "I wish I knew the most comforting way to tell you something. You say your mother is not living. What of your father? Pardon me for asking. It is not idle curiosity."

"We do not know where my father is," replied Barbara. "He left us when my little sister was a baby. Mamma always said he had gone to seek his fortune and would come back some day, but he never has come. So now, Roger, my brother, and I are sure he never will come; but my grandfather, I think, has never given up the hope that he is alive and that we shall see him some day."

"If you knew positively, it would be a certain relief, would it not, even if the truth were that you could never see him on earth again?" said Mr. Vandermeer, gently.

"Yes," returned Barbara, looking up with wistful eyes. "It is so dreadful not to know where he is; to imagine he may be ill, suffering, in trouble or danger. I think it is that which worries my grandfather."

Mr. Vandermeer laid a kind hand upon her shoulder.

"My dear child," he said, "your father is not living."

Barbara started, and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"Shall I tell you about it? Can you hear it?" he asked, in sympathetic tones.

"Oh, yes, please," replied Barbara, piteously, wondering what terrible possibilities lay behind the information.

"He died as a brave man should. You have every reason to reverence his memory. He laid down his life for a friend."

Barbara gave a little gasp of thankfulness, although the tears were dropping fast.

"I knew the friend," continued Mr. Vandermeer. "We were a party in Mexico at a time of great political trouble. We were, most of us, fearless and impetuous, expressing our opinions without hesitancy. This friend, Noñez, who was a native Mexican, was in danger of being arrested, and, besides this, he had made some bitter enemies. Some friends of his, to get him out of the threatened danger, hustled him one night on board a steamer which took him out of the country. I learned afterward that, in order to do this successfully, it was necessary for some one to represent the exiled man, and it was your father who volunteered to appear in his stead. I think none of us felt that there was any doubt but that he would escape

when it was discovered that he was not Noñez; but the matter was conducted in a way which was prompted by treachery and revenge. Those employed to despatch Noñez felt that somebody was to be shot, and——”

He paused, and Barbara faltered out,—

“And he, my father, was shot instead.”

Mr. Vandermeer nodded as he turned from her, his own feelings overcoming him.

In a moment he regained his composure.

“I did not know of it till two years after, and then I tried to find your mother, but I could not trace her. The name of the town where she lived had escaped me, and although I sent letters out, they were always returned. I made a search myself, but was told she was not living. In those days, when we were comrades, I remember Blake spoke of his father. I think he felt that he had been a disappointment to your grandfather, and he was anxious to make a record to be proud of before he should return.”

“He made it,” replied Barbara, softly. “It has been so long, Mr. Vandermeer, and that makes it easier. It is my grandfather who will feel it the most. Poor grandfather!”

“When he is ready to see me I shall be at your service,” said Mr. Vandermeer, gravely.

“Thank you,” replied Barbara. “You have been so kind to tell me this in the most comforting way. It is strange to know that it is really so. I cannot quite grasp it yet, but I am very thankful he died so bravely for another.”

She turned and left the room, going up-stairs to where Isabel was waiting for her.

"Well, what was the weighty secret?" inquired Isabel, meeting her at the door. "Oh, Barbara, was it really anything serious?"

"Yes," replied Barbara, "and it is all so very strange. I'm afraid I can't stand telling you just now. Your uncle will. And I must ask you to excuse me if I go home now. I really must. No," as Isabel offered to accompany her; "you mustn't mind if I go alone. If you will let me come another day to help you finish the cards, I shall be very glad to do it," she said, looking up with a faint smile.

"Oh, will you come?" said Isabel. "How good of you! I will call for you any day that you say. I am so sorry you must go in trouble. I shall come to see you very soon." And she took Barbara's face between her hands and softly kissed her.

Then Barbara took her leave, thinking little of the splendors she had left, but rather with a great dread of the task before her, that of telling her grandfather what she had just learned.

There was no sound to be heard as Barbara entered the house. Meta's usual cheerful song was missing, and there was an absence of the scraping of violins.

"Where can they all be?" thought she, as she went from one room to another. On the top floor she found Roger hard at work.

"Why, Barbara!" he said, "I did not hear you come in. I thought you were going to stay all day. Did you get mad and come home? Didn't you like the halls of the rich and the great?"

"Oh, yes," replied his sister, sitting down on the side of the bed. "It was lovely, Roger. You never

saw such magnificence. I wish I could tell you half I saw, and Isabel is a dear girl. I never knew girls could be so nice. But, oh, Roger, such a strange thing! I met Isabel's uncle, Mr. Vandermeer, and he knew papa when he was alive."

Roger turned quickly.

"When he was alive?" he repeated. "How do you know he is not still alive?"

"Mr. Vandermeer told me," answered Barbara, her voice trembling. And she related her story, while Roger sat with his gaze bent on her. At the close he gave a long sigh, saying,—

"It is far different from what we expected."

"I am very thankful," responded his sister. "It is so much to be able to remember always that he gave up his life for another."

"Yes," replied Roger. "But, Barbara, grandfather must be told."

"Oh, yes, I must tell him. Where is he?"

"He went out—no, he has just come in. I heard him shut his door. Meta took Helen to see the parade, and then they were going to the park. Mr. and Mrs. Blumenbach are out, too."

"Then I'll go to grandfather," said Barbara, with a troubled look.

"No;" and Roger stopped her. "You must let me, Barbara."

She drew back in surprise.

"Yes," returned Roger. "There is something to be learned from what my father did. It was very brave of him to die. I must be brave, too, and I'm for—for

grandfather, and you, and Helen.” And there was a little catch in Roger’s voice.

Truly, Roger was a strange boy, Barbara told herself as she allowed him to leave her without another word. He always found a different meaning in things from that she expected. How strange for him to take this so!

She sat waiting for her brother’s return, telling herself that she would then go to her grandfather and comfort him. Ought she not to have gone with Roger? she thought.

“I was a coward. I hated to go through the ordeal,” she sighed.

Just then came a startled call from below; then Roger came rushing up the steps.

“Barbara! Barbara!” he cried. “I don’t know what is the matter with grandfather. He—he—oh, I don’t know. Come quickly!”

CHAPTER XI

SAD HOURS

REACHING her grandfather with all possible speed, Barbara found him leaning heavily against the side of his arm-chair, his hand hanging nervelessly by his side.

"Grandfather! grandfather!" she cried. "Speak to me. Oh, Roger, run for the doctor, quick, any doctor, the nearest one." And while her brother sped upon his errand, she vainly tried to bring a recognizing glance from her grandfather's dulled eye.

Although it was but a short time before Roger returned to Barbara, it seemed hours.

The doctor, fortunately, came at once. "A slight paralytic stroke," he told them. "I do not think it is a dangerous attack," he said further. "And if Mr. Palmer has the good constitution I judge he has, he may not have a recurrence for years, if ever. Has he had any mental shock of late?" he asked.

Barbara looked at her brother. "Yes," she made answer, seeing that he was silent. And she gave the doctor a short account of what had happened.

He nodded his head gravely. "No doubt, no doubt that was it," he said. And Barbara, remembering that Roger did not possess the gift of fortunate expression, reproached herself for her cowardice in leaving him to make the revelation alone.

But, although in a few days Mr. Palmer recovered

speech, the right hand did not regain its powers, and the old violoncello stood silent in the corner of the room.

It was fortunate that the Palmers were under the roof of such kindly people, and good Mutterkin was unwearied in her attention to the invalid, while Herr Blumenbach, in his good, hearty way, brought sunshine into the sick room whenever he came.

In spite of all, however, Mr. Palmer did not rouse to an interest in that which went on about him. He clung to Barbara, but from Roger turned almost with aversion, it seemed; and Barbara, who knew her brother's heart yearned toward her grandfather, was greatly distressed. "If I had only taken the telling into my own hands," she said to herself. "I know grandfather would not have turned against me, but poor Boggie, he has no tact, and grandfather associates him with this loss, I am afraid."

Once only did Mr. Palmer refer to his son, and then it was to say musingly, "You remember your father, Barbara?"

"Oh, yes, grandfather," she made reply. Then after hesitating she said, softly, "Aren't you glad, grandfather, that he is safe?"

Her grandfather turned and looked at her as if a new idea had struck him. "Safe?" he repeated.

"Yes," said Barbara. Mr. Vandermeer had lately told her some things which had comforted her greatly, and she repeated them, telling of a swift little prayer sent up, in the face of death, of a few solemn words said at parting from his friend.

Mr. Palmer did not reply, but sat looking out into the soft spring sunshine.

Barbara stole out of the room and came back with a slip of paper in her hand. Poetry, music, pictures, these always appealed to her grandfather, and she sat down by him saying, "I cut such a dear little poem from the paper to-day. It reminds me of Dibby and the people in dear old Maryland. And then, in her soft voice, she read, in the dialect so familiar to them both:

"De massa ob de sheepfol',
Dat guard the sheepfol' bin,
Look out in de gloomerin' meadows,
Whar de long night rain begin.
So he call to de hirelin' shep'ad,
'Is my sheep, is dey all come in?'

"Oh, den says de hirelin' shep'ad,
'Dey's some, dey's black an' thin,
An' some dey's po' ole wedda's,
But de res' dey's all brung in,
But de res' dey's all brung in.'

"Den de massa ob de sheepfol',
Dat guard de sheepfol' bin,
Goes down to the gloomerin' meadows,
Where de long night rain begin.
So he le' down de ba's ob de sheepfol',
Callin' sof', 'Come in, come in!'
Callin' sof', 'Come in, come in!'

"Den up t'ro' de gloomerin' meadows,
T'ro' de col' night rain an' win',
An' up t'ro' de gloomerin' rain-paf,
Whar de sleet fall pie'cin' thin,
De po' los' sheep ob de sheepfol',
Dey all comes gadderin' in;
De po' los' sheep ob de sheepfol',
Dey all comes gadderin' in."

"Thank you, daughter," said her grandfather, when she had finished, then, leaning back, he closed his eyes; and from that time began to look with more interested vision upon the world.

But the poor right hand which used to draw the bow with such grace across the strings of the 'cello refused to waken the sonorous chords. Yet it seemed as if the closed heart found new expression. And the invalid gradually became aware of what was absorbing those around him. He began to notice the small affairs of others, and quite surprised Barbara, and even Helen, by his attention to their little interests.

By the time the June roses came he was able to go about, a little falteringly, to be sure, but quite readily.

Isabel had been a devoted friend all this while, and would bring dainties, send flowers, call and take Barbara and her grandfather to drive, so that Barbara felt that her friendship was not a thing of idle words.

Mr. Vandermeer, too, called frequently, until he took his departure from the city, so that a pleasant relation was established between him and Mr. Palmer.

The luncheon had been deferred, Isabel absolutely refusing to give it unless a majority of the class could be present, and seemed to consider Barbara the majority; so while she was absorbed in her attentions to her grandfather the luncheon waited.

Barbara's first outing after the long confinement in her grandfather's sick-room was to the Gardner's. The delightful musical evenings instituted at Mr. Gardner's studio were always a pleasure to Mr. Palmer. Now, however, he could not venture out at night, and Barbara missed his presence, and her thoughts turned to-

ward the sonata of the great-great-grandfather, Nicholas Palmer. It was only a few days before that her grandfather had spoken of it. "I shall publish it some day," he said, "but I am first anxious that it should be well rendered where the world can hear and admire." His belief in its merit was great, but, somehow, every one did not share it, and so far it had not been easy to find a place and opportunity for presenting it. Or was it a certain timidity and reticence in the old man which forbade his urging its claims?

On this special evening Barbara learned that a noted musician was present, and, although blushing at her own temerity, she made known to him the existence of the old manuscript. "I should like to see it," he said; "will your grandfather allow me to look it over?"

Barbara had her own plans, and she answered, "I am sure I can get it, if you would like to see it," being well pleased at the interest she had awakened. "I would take it to you," she suggested, as Mr. Jamison remarked that it would not do to risk sending it by mail.

"Oh, that would be most kind," he replied to her suggestion, and setting a day and hour, he gave her his address, and left the girl in a state of pleased excitement.

"Oh, how fine it would be to see to it all myself," she thought; "to find that Mr. Jamison would bring it out. I should so love to give grandfather a surprise. Fancy how amazed he would be to go to a concert and hear them play the sonata by Nicholas Palmer." And she went home full of her plan, which she unfolded to no one.

"How shall I get the manuscript without letting grandfather know," was the question which Barbara found so hard to answer, that at last, conscientious little maid though she was, temptation overcame her, and she decided to take it from its usual place and carry it to Mr. Jamison without asking leave. "I'm doing it all for grandfather," she kept telling herself, to stifle the protest conscience made, and she waited, with her mind quite made up, till the day should arrive.

Meanwhile, there came a new experience in the taking of a trip to Coney Island with the Blumenbachs.

Such a jolly party was that which started for the sea-shore the next morning. The salt breezes met them as the steamboat left the harbor. The fine harbor where vessels from all over the world were lying. Here a graceful schooner, dipping and courtesying upon the waves, sailed past, then a huge ocean liner was being towed in by an energetic little tug-boat; again, a sound steamer like a floating palace swept by, while all the while the ferry-boats, "like big turtles," so Helen said, plied back and forth.

The statue of Liberty enlightening the World seemed very near, and the long line of Staten Island lying beyond looked very fair in the morning light.

" 'Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green.'

Doesn't it remind you of that?" said Barbara, turning to speak to her brother. But Roger had long ago gone down to see if he could get a sight of the engine-room,

and having come across an officer, who was attracted by the keen interest the boy showed, and had taken him under his wing, was now being shown all over the vessel.

So Barbara sat still upon her camp-stool, which she found on deck, and gave herself up to the enjoyment of the stiff breeze, which met them as the steamboat cut through the water.

Herr Blumenbach took Helen in tow as soon as they landed; Roger wandered off to investigate the wonderful things which were offered for his amusement, and the rest took up their places upon the pier, where it seemed to Barbara she would be content to sit all day to watch the big breakers roll in, or to look off at the blue ocean and see a white sail flitting across, or perhaps to watch a little row-boat riding in upon the waves.

It was a wonderful day for the three children, and they never forgot the pleasure which this first sight of the wide sea brought them.

All this excitement quite put the thought of the sonata out of Barbara's head, and it was not till the next afternoon that she remembered her promise to take the manuscript to Mr. Jamison.

Watching her opportunity, she slipped into her grandfather's room and bore it with her to her own quarters. Half an hour later she was on her way to the piano warerooms over which Mr. Jamison had his office and studio.

She found the musician promptly on hand, and, in a tremor of fear as to what might happen, left the manuscript, promising to call for it the next day.

"Oh, dear," she said to herself, as she went out. "What have I done? Suppose anything should happen to it. Suppose Mr. Jamison's studio should burn up. Oh, dear, I'm afraid I should have asked leave to take it." And she was in a quiver of suspense until the next afternoon, when she returned to find it safe and sound.

"I should like very much to see your grandfather," Mr. Jamison said. "I find this very interesting, and should like to have the honor of placing it before one of our musical societies, and if Mr. Palmer is willing, I am sure there will be no difficulty in having it properly rendered."

So Barbara started home very happily, feeling that she had accomplished what she set out to do, and rather inclined to give herself credit for being a very astute young person.

"I don't know what grandfather will say to my taking the manuscript without leave," she said to herself; "but, after all, I had a sort of a right to it. Nicholas Palmer was my ancestor, too, and I owed him a certain duty." But there was a little protesting twinge, withal, and Barbara made her way through the crowded streets to the library, where she meant to stop for a book, with a little uneasy feeling of not knowing exactly what would be best to say in vindication of her act.

Having procured her book, she took the elevated car for home. She was quite used by this time to the swift-moving cars, and hung on to her strap as they swung around the corners, thinking it no novelty. She noticed a black-eyed little old lady eying her sharply,

and she wondered why her face seemed familiar, but her corner being reached, she got off without satisfying herself on the subject, and hurried toward home.

But suddenly she came to a standstill with an exclamation of dismay. The manuscript was gone!

CHAPTER XII

AUNT THANKFUL

RETRACING her steps, Barbara looked closely along the street through which she had just come; but there was no sign of the lost package, and in despair she rushed up the steps leading to the Elevated Railway station she had just left and inquired of the man at the ticket office, but all the information she gained was that, if her address were on the package, it might be returned, and that inquiry could be made at the office in Rector Street. She was satisfied that it was in her hands when she entered the car, for she remembered shifting it under her arm more securely when she reached for the strap. She decided to tell Roger to call at the office to make inquiry for her, and then she returned home in a much less complacent frame of mind. Her only consolation lay in the fact that her grandfather's name and address had been written on the package by Mr. Jamison. It was Saturday afternoon, and, as was likely to be the case, every one was out except the maid; but Barbara, entering the sitting-room, came upon a little old lady rocking and knitting briskly.

"Well! well! well!" she said; "here you are at last! I've been watching the clock for half an hour." This as though Barbara had failed to keep an engagement. "Where's your grandfather?"

"Grandfather? Why, let me see; I think he gen-

erally goes to a rehearsal with Mr. Blumenbach on Saturday afternoons."

"Now, isn't that Roger Palmer all over!" said the little old lady, turning her bright eyes upon Barbara. "I suppose he still clings to that 'cello. Why, in the name of common sense, doesn't he have more git-up-and-git about him, like other men? Which are you, Helen or Barbara?"

"I am Barbara."

"And I suppose you've no notion who I am?"

"No," replied Barbara. "I don't think I have."

"I'm your Aunt Thankful—Roger Palmer's aunt, Thankful Ray."

Barbara stared. Surely this old lady could not be more than her grandfather's age.

"Yes, of course, you look astonished. I'm no older than your grandfather, if I am his aunt. Goodness knows, I might as well be the aunt of any one else for all I've heard of him these ten years past. His mother was my eldest sister, a matter of twenty years between us."

"I'm so glad you are a relation!" said Barbara, her face lighting up.

"You are?" responded the old lady, quite mollified. "Then perhaps you'll be doubly glad when you see what I've brought;" and, diving down into a bag, she brought forth the lost packet.

"Oh," exclaimed Barbara, darting forward, "I am so glad! Oh, thank you! I remember you now. I see now that you are something like my grandfather. I saw you in the car."

"Yes, and when you got out this slid from under

your arm and fell at my feet. Well, truth is stranger than fiction! And when I picked it up and saw the address you could have knocked me down with a feather. I got out of the car at the next station, for I soon satisfied myself that I was on the right track. You look like your mother," she added, abruptly.

"Oh, did you know mamma?"

"Certainly I know her. Blake Palmer met her at my house."

"Oh," exclaimed Barbara, "how delightful to see some one who knew mamma then! You can tell me so many things. I am so very glad to get this package! It is very valuable, for it is an old manuscript which my grandfather thinks everything of."

"Yes; I know it is that old manuscript of Nicholas Palmer's."

"Why, did you know about it? Did you ever see it before?"

"Scores of times, and I recognized it as soon as I opened the package, for I wanted to be sure if it were *my* Roger Palmer, and that settled it. What were you doing with it, pray?"

Barbara flushed up, and then confessed the whole of her error.

"What are you going to say to your grandfather?" asked Miss Ray, with a penetrating look.

"I am going to tell him all about it. Oh, Aunt Thankful, you do not think I would deceive him about it?"

"Judging from what you have just done, I think I had a right to," she remarked, incisively; and Barbara, feeling the truth of this, recognized her fault

more plainly than before. "Well, well," continued the old lady, seeing Barbara's look of humility, "it is quite likely I am a little hard on you. I don't know you yet." And she changed the subject by putting many questions which Barbara was kept busy answering till her grandfather returned.

"Well, Roger Palmer," exclaimed Aunt Thankful, as he entered the room, "why on earth haven't you let me know you were here?"

Mr. Palmer started, and then came hastily forward. "Thankful Ray!" he exclaimed, "this is indeed a surprise."

"Of course it is," was the reply. "'It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.' Tell him, Barbara, how I happened to find you." And the girl faltered out her tale.

Her grandfather shook his head over the losing of the manuscript and was very grave, but at Barbara's account of her interview with Mr. Jamison he lost sight of the disaster and began putting questions about the musician, which Barbara answering satisfactorily, he was much pleased, and said, "Well, my child, I am glad you were so ready to do honor to your ancestors. I shall be most pleased to receive Mr. Jamison. Would that I might once more bring out my old 'cello! But you did wrong, Barbara! You did wrong!"

"I know it," she replied, with downcast eyes. "I am sorry I took it without leave, but I did not want you to be disappointed if I failed."

"I appreciate that," returned her grandfather. "But a truce to these unpleasant topics. Tell me, Thankful, all about yourself."

"Well, if you remembered anything, you would know that I live at the old homestead, where your mother was born," she returned.

Mr. Palmer nodded.

"It is just up here in Westchester," she went on to say.

"I remember. I remember."

"I haven't any one but myself," Aunt Thankful informed him; "myself, and my cats, and my parrot; but I love the old place, and mean to stay there. I come down to New York every whipstitch, however, so I'm not so terribly behind the times. Come out to see me, Roger, and bring these children. I want to get acquainted with them. Helen Farquhar, their mother, was the sweetest girl I ever knew." And Aunt Thankful took her leave after obtaining a promise from her nephew that he would bring all three of the children to see her the next Saturday.

The result of that visit was that the way was opened to several things. Helen found that Aunt Thankful would be delighted to take Ducky; Barbara discovered fascinating old costumes in the chests up in the garret, from which she was allowed to select something to wear to the luncheon. Roger found in Aunt Thankful, whimsical, brusque, sharp though she was, an appreciative relative, who neither frowned down his oddities nor laughed at his enthusiasms, and Mr. Palmer, finding himself treated like an ordinary, sensible mortal, began to respond to what was expected of him.

"It doesn't do to consider some people too much," said Aunt Thankful, sagely. "You've been spoiled, Roger Palmer. Who are you that you should be ex-

cused from taking your part in the battle of life? Wake up, man! You've a duty to these grandchildren of yours, and you ought to have seen it long ago. If you hadn't been fed on sugar and had velvet cushions to lie upon, maybe you might have done better. Those dear, good little things! It's a wonder they are not as crooked as rams' horns with such bringing up. It's nothing to your credit that they're what they are. It's all their mother's doing, and nothing is due to the Palmer side."

And Mr. Palmer smiled and replied, "It sounds very natural to hear you berate me, Thankful. You were always doing it when I was a boy."

"Well, you certainly needed it," returned Aunt Thankful, tartly.

The luncheon, which took place before the end of June, was a great success. Nothing could have been prettier than that gathering of youth in the quaint costumes of those who were long ago young, who had grown old, and whose very names were well-nigh forgotten. Isabel, in the dress of a Dutch maiden, with her queer head-dress and her silver ornaments, received her guests. Madge Delorme wore the costume of a French girl of the fourteenth century, in keeping with her Huguenot blood. Elsie Jordan appeared as a demure little Puritan, in cap and folded kerchief, while Barbara wore her great-great-grandmother's short-waisted wedding-gown, long mitts, and the big bonnet in which the aforetime Barbara had "walked bride."

There were mysterious silken threads attached to



After the feast, the girls set to work to make their sketches



each girl's bunch of roses which lay by her plate, and after the luncheon the girls, following these labyrinthine clews, wandered from room to room to discover what might be at the other end of these silken guides.

"Oh, I've found mine!" came from Madge Delorme in the hall, as she came upon a little box hidden behind a picture. "Oh, girls, I have such a pretty something!"

Following this came a similar call from Elsie Jordan, and then one after another returned to the dining-room to display their favors. Elsie's was a pretty little statuette of "Priscilla, the Puritan Maiden." Madge found a tiny Dresden figure of a shepherdess in her Watteau gown; Anita Garcia discovered a Spanish fan; Barbara disengaged from the end of her silk cord a jewel box in which lay an enamel violet, a tiny diamond dew-drop sparkling in its heart, while the other girls were equally well remembered.

"Such lovely things, Isabel!" said Madge. "You are nothing if not a princess."

And such a luncheon as it was! All the dainties which girls like were set forth upon a table in the largest of the class-rooms at the school, where about a dozen girls were gathered.

The *menu* cards were not the least appreciated of the features of the occasion, and when, after the feast, the girls set to work to make their sketches, it became apparent that the rest of the afternoon would be occupied in this way. Mr. Adams came in later, and there was a merry time over the criticisms, for some of the sketches were very funny. The number on Bar-

bara's card won for her Madge Delorme's spirited little water-color of Isabel. To be sure, it did not much resemble the model, but it was a nice, fresh piece of work, and Mr. Adams praised it, so Barbara felt herself well content at having secured it. Mr. Adams himself made one or two sketches, and, to her great delight, bestowed upon Isabel the one of Barbara. Then and there the girls organized a summer sketch class, declaring that there was too much talent among them to go to waste, and they parted in high good-humor.

"We have certainly had a good time," said they. "We hope you'll win a prize every year, Isabel, if this is the use you make of it."

It had been a great experience for Barbara. She was gradually expanding in more than one direction, and for a little time, when in the current of pleasure, she envied Isabel her gay world, with its luxuries, its butterfly sporting in the sunshine. But, for some reason, when these thoughts threatened to get the best of her there came a remembrance of that street full of crowded tenements, of the loveless lives, of the desperate hand-to-mouth struggle for existence, and to-day she turned out of Fifth Avenue, up and down which luxurious carriages were rolling, to the quiet side street where she lived, a feeling in her heart of there being greater riches to desire than those which gold could buy.

She found her grandfather deep in a conference with Mr. Jamison.

"Well, Miss Palmer," said the latter gentleman, "we have arranged to bring about the sonata. It is a pity your grandfather is not able to join us in the 'cello

parts. I imagine he could add much to the composition."

"I should like to sit among the musicians with my old 'cello," Mr. Palmer said, wishfully. "I have so often dreamed of the time when I should play the solo myself. I know it so well; every note, every mark is stamped upon my memory."

"Certainly you shall sit with us," replied Mr. Jamison. "We shall all feel honored and inspired by your presence." And he made his farewells after settling upon a date when the sonata should be heard.

It was only a summer concert before a small audience, but it represented the world, and, therefore, when an interested little company, consisting of the Gardners, the Blumenbachs, Roger, and his sisters, gathered in the small hall they awaited the issue with intense interest.

It was, after all, something of a venture to place the sonata of Nicholas Palmer alongside selections from such great masters as Beethoven, Mozart, and Schumann. So Mrs. Gardner felt, and she wondered if the performance would not fall flat upon the audience.

One, two, three numbers were played; then it came. The first movement over, then came that in which the 'cello solo occurred. Barbara, watching, saw her grandfather lean forward, saw him tune his 'cello with the others, a strained look upon his face, as if he would defy all weakness. Then, with the soloist, he too raised his bow, and the feeble fingers, which for weeks had been unable to grasp anything, found new vigor, and the rich, tender notes arose clearly. The other 'cellist looked up wonderingly, and presently he stopped, after

glancing at the leader, while Mr. Palmer went on unfalteringly—on—on—amid breathless silence. It seemed as if the old 'cello fairly spoke—as if it bore a message long hidden in its strings. There were tears in Mrs. Gardner's eyes as she leaned forward. Her husband rose to his feet, then sat down again, remembering. And as the other instruments came in and took up the theme there was a stir among the audience, for they had recognized the playing of no ordinary hand. What if the rest of the sonata were commonplace and scarce fulfilled even ordinary promise? That one movement redeemed the work of Nicholas Palmer, and Barbara, with hot cheeks, felt that, in spite of all, she bore some part in the triumph, and that her effort, somewhat misguided as it had been, had helped her grandfather to the fairest moment he had known in all his life.

And when at the close he was called before the audience of music lovers and bowed with his courtly grace, the girl felt a strange exultation; then, looking at Roger, she saw that there were tears in his eyes. "Poor Boggie," she thought, "I am afraid he has failed after all his effort," for no word had she been able to get from him concerning his invention since that day when his abrupt disclosure of his father's fate had so affected their grandfather.

CHAPTER XIII

HONORS

BUT Roger had not been idle. He had striven to the uttermost, had faced failure doggedly, and had finally overcome difficulties, cheered by Barbara's help and sympathy. Now he was ready to test the working of his little machine. But he was a strange boy, and on that fateful day when his grandfather lay helpless before him he had determined not to give out the news of his success till he should see his grandfather again able to enjoy his greatest source of pleasure, his 'cello. "I won't enjoy anything unless grandfather does," he told himself. And now the supreme moment had come, and the 'cello, which spoke of returning hope to the old man, spoke, too, to the boy, who longed for a word of approbation from the one whose opinion he most valued.

"Oh, grandfather, it was wonderful!" said Barbara. "Ah, your good right hand! I am so happy."

"And I, too, my child," he replied. "It has been a wonderful realization of a long-felt desire; and your effort made it possible."

The next evening Roger strode into the sitting-room with a small model in his hands. Young Mr. Blumenbach was with him, an exultant look on his face. "I am a very proud young man," he said, "for I have to introduce to you the inventor of a very clever little machine, which I think is going to be of great use in some of our shops. Here is the machine."

"And you are the inventor, I suppose," Mr. Palmer said, courteously.

Mr. Karl smiled. "No; I wish I were. Here is the inventor." And he pulled Roger forward.

Mr. Palmer dropped his glasses in surprise. "You!" he exclaimed. "Not you, Roger?"

"Yes," said Mr. Karl. "I'll tell you all about it." And he began with the history of Roger's efforts, telling of his studies at the Cooper Institute; of his persistent trials till success came; of how he would not ask for the means to have the model made.

"But where did he get the money?" Mr. Palmer asked. "Where did you get it, Roger?"

"From Barby," was the reply. "I should never have had the money nor the encouragement but for her," he continued, unheeding Barbara's frowns and head-shakings, and in his blunt way covering her still further with confusion by adding, "Do you suppose I'd let you, or any one else, do anything for me without giving credit for it? I don't take things I'm ashamed to acknowledge."

"But you would only borrow it," Barbara protested. "Grandpa, he wouldn't let me give it to him."

"But where did you get it?"

And now it was Barbara's turn to look conscious, as Roger told of her having won the prize, and of her keeping it a secret on his account. "But," she said, turning the tables, "I don't understand your keeping this a secret so long. Why, the model was to have been done long ago."

Roger cast a swift glance at his grandfather, and then he looked down, blurting out, "Do you suppose

that I was going to let myself be happy over it, when grandfather was deprived of his happiness in not being able to play on his 'cello?"

Mr. Palmer's face took on a curious expression; his lips trembled, and, getting up, he walked unsteadily to where his grandson stood, a proud, defiant look on his boyish face. "My boy," said the old man, putting his hands on the lad's shoulders, "you shame me. I am touched beyond expression. Have I so misunderstood you all these years?" And bending down, he kissed Roger's forehead, and the boy grew white to the lips with emotion. At last he had won this.

"Roger must love you awfully hard, grandpa," piped up Helen's childish voice. "I'm awfully proud of him, aren't you?"

"Proud? I am proud of you all, my children," said their grandfather. "I who thought myself a loveless, hopeless old man, to receive all that has come to me this day! to receive affection unstinted, praise unlooked for; success and honors for those of my name, for those who have gone before me and for those who now redeem the promise I once hoped would be fulfilled in him who was my son. What a blind dreamer I have been, wrapped in my own selfish grief! Oh, my friends, I am very happy to-night."

And Herr Blumenbach, for once, had no merry sally to make, while the frau kept patting her son vigorously on the back as if to encourage herself in not shedding tears which filled her eyes.

"Oh, Boggie, Boggie," said Barbara, "I'm so proud of you, and of grandfather, too. What talent you have!"

"And you, too," put in Helen. "You won the prize, and we never knew it. Oh, Barby!"

"To be sure, no one has congratulated Miss Barbara," said Mr. Karl. Thereupon, they all rushed forward, and presently the girl found herself in the centre of a merry ring, for the rest joined hands and danced around her, even Mr. Palmer trying to take stately steps as he found himself unable to break away from the clasp of Herr Blumenbach's big hand.

In the midst of the merriment the Gardners came in, bringing Isabel Bromley with them, and, being ushered into the room by the smiling Meta, they were surprised to see a strange performance: six persons galloping wildly around Barbara, and singing, at Helen's suggestion, "Here we go round the *Barbara* bush."

"What game are you playing?" cried Mrs. Gardner. "You are the most ridiculous people that ever were."

They all stopped short, and then came explanations, bringing with them fresh praises for Roger and his grandfather.

"We knew all about the prize," said Mrs. Gardner. "Isabel won the first prize, you know." So, carried away by the spirit of the occasion, another and larger ring was formed around Isabel, who declared that she did not see why Mr. Palmer and Roger should be left out of the exercises, and, breaking through the band, she escaped, when Roger and his grandfather found themselves encircled, the old man resting his hand on the shoulder of the boy, who felt warmed to the heart by the unfamiliar caress.

That night Barbara stole up to her brother's room

before she slept. She found him sitting before his mother's portrait, the little model on the table in front of him. "Dear old Boggie!" was all that Barbara could say.

Roger put his arm around her, and what was in the heart of the other each knew.

Aunt Thankful's "I told you so," when she was informed of Roger's success, was what might have been expected, and her sharp suggestions and tart remarks to Mr. Palmer no doubt had their effect in instituting certain plans he made for his grandchildren.

"How often do you go to church, Roger Palmer?" Aunt Thankful asked one day.

"I? Why, Thankful, I have not felt that I could go since—since Blake left us," was the reply.

"Humph! That's the way you appreciate your blessings. My goodness, Roger Palmer, I get out of patience with you! What's kept that boy of yours from going into all sorts of evil? Not your example, I'll be bound, but his mother's lasting influence and his sister's patience and sympathy. What has kept those two little girls from mischief? Your watchful care? Not a bit of it. It's high time you bestirred yourself to look after your own eternal welfare, since they seem to be able to take hold of what is good for them without any help from you. The idea of a man of your age shirking the responsibilities the Lord gave him along with such treasures as not many men have. What are you going to do about it?"

"Why, really, Thankful, I don't know. What would you suggest?"

"I would suggest your taking a pew in church and

going with those children every Sunday like a Christian and a good citizen, instead of allowing them to be under obligations to strangers for a seat. They have been sitting in the Gardners' pew ever since they have been in the city."

"Really, Thankful, you have a very unpleasant way of recalling me to my duty, although I must acknowledge that I have never thought of this before; and I am quite shocked to think that I have allowed the children to accept the Gardners' hospitality for so long. I will see to sittings at once, even if I do not go myself to church."

Miss Thankful snapped off her thread sharply. "Don't you think you owe the Lord some sort of service?" she asked. "Is it given many men to be proud, at the last, of a son like yours?"

Mr. Palmer started as if stung by a whip. "Hush, Thankful, hush!" he said, in an agitated voice.

"No, I shall not," was the reply, given calmly. "It is better to talk about it. He died like a hero, no matter how he lived. Does that demand nothing from you? Is it nothing that you are restored to the use of your hand? Is it nothing that those children are ready to give you respect and affection and consideration? I tell you, Roger Palmer, you'd better look yourself over."

And the looking over resulted in the punctual attendance at church thereafter of the entire family, if it did nothing else. Roger found himself relied upon as being his grandfather's special companion on Sundays, so by degrees the wall was broken down between them and a full affection grew up. In time Roger

responded to his grandfather's trust in him by giving more punctilious regard to his speech and his appearance, and this was a matter of satisfaction to Barbara as well.

It was largely due to Isabel and Mrs. Gardner that Barbara outgrew her little awkwardnesses, and it was due to Barbara that Isabel found the answers to certain grave questions which she met steadily and unflinchingly. Helen spent much of her time with Aunt Thankful, whose home held great delights for the little girl. Ducky waddled about in the yard and found comforting mud-puddles and ample ponds in which to revel. The cats were as interesting as the parrot, and, altogether, Aunt Thankful's old home by degrees took the place of that Maryland one to which Helen nevermore returned, for, as time went by, new interests were brought by the new environment.

"I should not care to go back now," Barbara said to her grandfather.

"Nor I," he replied. "I will sell the place to Mr. Haynes, who has made me an offer for it, and we will make Aunt Thankful's house our Mecca when we want to go on a pilgrimage to the country."

So Barbara works away at her drawing with Isabel daily a dearer companion. Through Mr. Karl's exertions, Roger sold his patent, and proudly repaid his sister with part of the money, and it is certain that, in consequence, Ike Kellar had a much more heavily laden basket to carry the next Christmas. Ike, it may be said, is bearing out his promise of winning respect, and talks of the day when he shall have a shop of his own. As for Roger's prospects, he is not likely to

disappoint his grandfather, from the present outlook, and if, sometimes, the lion mood gets the better of him, Barbara has learned that to beard him in his den is a better plan than to let him alone, and the mood soon passes off, for work is the best cure-all for discontent, and of work Roger has an abundance.

Nicholas Palmer's sonata was published at last, and there are but the few who, having heard that fine 'cello solo, call it an unusually good composition. To the rest of the world it seems only mediocre.

It is so pleasant to have Frau Blumenbach to mother them all and to hear Herr Blumenbach's hearty laugh, that the idea has not yet occurred to the Palmers of leaving their pleasant quarters in old Greenwich village, as Barbara likes to call it, although to New York in general it is but one of the unfashionable neighborhoods which help to make up the city. Aunt Thankful, however, has a great respect for the place, knowing the traditions which surround it. Aunt Thankful, by the way, was a valuable discovery. She keeps every one in order, and the sharpness of her tongue does not in the smallest degree detract from the warmth of her heart, nor from her good sense; and, after all, she is a most satisfying individual, for, even if she goes to the very heart of a fault, she always gives credit where it is due, and she does not allow her vigilance to relax, so that to live up to her idea of one it becomes necessary to do one's very best.

One Sunday evening, not very long ago, there might have been seen gathered in Frau Blumenbach's sitting-room a small company. There was a tall man with scanty white hair, playing upon the 'cello an old Ger-

man air. Looking over his shoulder was a dark-eyed lad who sang heartily that fine old hymn of Luther's, "A mighty fastness is our God." All were joining in, some in German, some in English. Sweet and clear above the rest came the voice of a girl, who sat with hands clasped, her eyes seeming to look off into the future where trial and struggle perhaps await her, but she has learned to be patient, and is ready for whatever the years may demand.

PART II.

CHAPTER I

A SKETCHING PARTY

It was upon a morning in May that a group of girls were chattering volubly in one of the ferry-houses on the New York side of East River. Each girl carried her sketching-materials and a compact, square parcel, and all seemed to be waiting for some one.

"Another boat going," spoke up one of the number as the clattering chain and warning bell announced that a ferry-boat was about to leave the slip. "We'll miss that train as sure as you live, girls."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter much," one of the party replied. "We don't absolutely have to go to Flushing, you know. This is a kind of a frolic, and we can go to one place as well as another, if we feel like it. We might go up to Forty-second Street and take a train out from there almost any time. I think it's prettier up in that direction, anyhow."

"And I, too," declared Madge Delorme. "There are so many picturesque bits along the Sound."

"Here they come at last," cried Elsie Jordan. "I know Mr. Adams's stride, and Mrs. Adams is with him. Isabel and Barbara are just behind them." And

she waved her camp-stool to attract the attention of the three now approaching.

"Here we are, Mr. Adams; every mother's son, I was going to say, but for son read daughter. We were beginning to think something had happened, and that we should have to give up this long-talked-of trip," Madge said.

"It was my fault, Madge," Isabel hastened to say. "I am so unused to catering, that I forgot all about the luncheon I was to bring, and had to stop at the last minute to get something."

"You needn't have done that," Madge told her. "I'm sure we'll have twice as much as we can eat; one always does at a picnic or excursion of any kind. This is the last boat over, so we'll have to hurry. Isn't it a gorgeous day? I don't suppose I'll touch my colors. I always get lazy when I go off like this, and I give myself up to enjoying the out-of-dooriness."

"What a word!" laughed Isabel. "Come, Barbara, don't let me lose you. I want to go forward where we can see up and down the river. No, you shall not carry my box. I'm bigger than you are. Here, we'll pile the things in a heap on the floor."

The boat was soon grinding against the sides of the slip, then there came a scramble to get on the train; but at last, this part of the journey over, they found themselves in the veritable country, as Madge averred. "And look at us all streaking after Mr. Adams," she said, "like the twenty lovesick maidens in *Patience*."

"It is rather a ridiculous sight," Isabel acknowledged. "It is a pity the masculine element isn't better represented. Mr. and Mrs. Gardner said they would

try to join us later in the day, and that will even up matters a little. Ten females and one lone man is rather a one-sided state of affairs. Is this the place where we are to come to a halt? Isn't it a lovely spot? My, but I'm glad to be rid of these traps! Sketching has its disadvantages in compelling one to carry such a lot of stuff. I positively could not burden myself with a stool, and shall depend upon mother earth for a spot on which to rest my weary bones."

"Look at Barbara; if she hasn't begun already," said Madge. "Did you ever know such untiring devotion? During the two or three years that she has been among us I believe she has accomplished more than any girl in the school."

"I know," returned Isabel, plaintively. "She isn't fettered by social duties, as I am."

Madge laughed. "That is always Isabel's complaint," she remarked to Elsie Jordan. "Her grudge against social codes is something inherent. Being hampered is the worst condition she can imagine. I think her great-grandfather must have been a freebooter or a pirate on the high seas. Wasn't he, Isabel?"

"Of course not," she replied. "Look at the light on Barbara's hair. Isn't it something exquisite? I must have a try at her as she sits there. Please toss my paraphernalia over, Madge. It is just there by you."

"Which are you going to use, oil or water-colors?" Madge asked, lazily watching Isabel.

"Water-colors, I think, although that glint lends itself better to oils, but the other is quickest. Don't move, Barbara," she called.

Barbara gave a little smiling glance in her direction,

and then went on with her work. In a few minutes Isabel flung down her brush in despair. "It is simply impossible. She is the most subtle thing, anyhow, that I ever saw. I've tried dozens of times to make a good study of her, but I have never succeeded. It would take a Sargent to do her justice."

Madge picked up Isabel's sketching block and began to scribble fantastic figures on it, but she threw it down almost immediately. "I can't do anything," she said. "This is one of the days when 'it is enough for me not to be doing, but to be.' Where are you off to, Isabel?"

"I'm going to hunt up some sequestered nook. All the others have pitched in and are getting that bit of a barn and the mill-race. I scorn to be a copy-cat. I want to find something strictly original. Will you go, Madge?"

"No, thank you. I've no idea of falling into bogs or of stumping my toes against hidden snares in the way of moss-covered stones."

Isabel picked up her box and started off on her own account. "You were impossible, as usual," she said, as she passed Barbara. "How are you getting along?"

"Fairly well. I'm not attempting too much."

"Wise child. Your modesty always prevents your getting swamped, while my untoward ambition plunges me into all sorts of quagmires."

"Where are you going?"

"To hunt up some quiet spot where I can commune with nature and myself, and where I won't have half a dozen girls to ask me how I am getting on. I want to be where I can make all the mistakes I choose and no one be the wiser. When you have finished what you

are doing, come hunt me up. I shall probably be in a fit state of humility by that time to be led meekly back by a halter. That's such a deliciously fresh little sketch Mr. Adams is at work upon. I am seized with a desire to go and do likewise. Good-by."

"Don't get into any trouble, off by yourself."

"No, I'll try not. I fancy I'll not get so far away that the wolves will fall upon me and leave my bones bleaching on the sands." And she sauntered off, leaving Barbara to finish her sketch.

It was perhaps half an hour later that the sketch was completed; at least Barbara told herself that, with the sun rising higher and higher, the effect of light and shade did not warrant her continuing. "I'll spoil it," she said, looking at it critically, "and I might as well let it go for what it is worth. I'll hunt up Isabel."

She took her way across the road and followed a path which seemed to offer attractions. "She'd be pretty sure to come this way," Barbara thought, and a short walk proved that she was right in her conjectures, for not far off she saw the scarlet poppies in Isabel's hat; they seemed to be bobbing about in a most reckless manner, and Barbara hastened her steps to find out what was the matter. When she was within calling distance she stood still. "Isabel! Isabel!" she cried, "what is the matter?" for Isabel was dodging behind first one and then another of two trees.

Since no reply reached her, Barbara called again. Isabel did not turn her head, and then Barbara saw that she had fixed her gaze upon a belligerent goat, which, with head down, was making lunges at her. Barbara advanced a step or two.

"Don't come any nearer," cried Isabel. "The wretch has eaten up my sketch and upset my color-box, and now is determined to have me. Is it because I look very green, Barbara?" she asked, hysterically.

"I never saw you display such agility," said Barbara, half laughing, yet feeling a little anxious, for Master Billy did look so very wicked. "Run for the fence," she said, "and I'll see if I can't beat him off."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," replied Isabel between her dancing flights.

But at this moment some one was seen vaulting the worm fence. Next he ran rapidly toward them and seized Master Billy by the horns, and Isabel was free to run to Barbara's side, breathless from her efforts.

The two were starting across the field when suddenly Isabel stopped. "We can't go without thanking him," she said. "What is he doing?"

Barbara glanced over her shoulder. "He seems to be dancing with the goat," she replied, with a laugh she could not repress. "We will have to go back anyhow, to get your sketching things. I see a heavy stick lying over there; let us take that to Mr. Deliverer."

Isabel agreed, and they retraced their steps. "Will you have this?" Barbara asked, holding out the stick which she had picked up.

"Yes, thank you," was the reply from the young man, who was still sturdily wrestling with the goat.

"But please don't hurt him."

The young man laughed. "Is he a pet of yours?"

"No, indeed. We never met him till to-day."

"I'll not hurt him, although he needs a lesson in good manners."

"That is why we came back," said Isabel, mirthfully. "We thought we were not setting a good example."

At sight of the stick the goat ceased his attacks, and, shaking his head, ran off, leaving them victors of the field.

"You were sketching," the young man said, picking up Isabel's color-box and looking interested.

"Yes," she replied; "that was what first attracted the goat. He was so delighted with the realism of my work that he insisted upon eating the sketch. I hope he found it good."

"It was very good," the young man answered, soberly.

Isabel shot him a look of surprise. "How do you know?" she asked, quickly.

"I was mean enough to peep as I was passing behind where you were sitting. You were too absorbed to notice me, but, being one of the fraternity, I had to look."

"Oh!" Isabel's haughty expression melted into one of pleased surprise. "Were you sketching, too? Where?"

"Just over the fence in that field. There are some nice little bits about here. Will you let me walk to the road with you, that I may be able to ward off future attentions from our friend, the goat? Or, if you would not mind waiting for me a moment, I'll go back and get my stuff and then see you safely established wherever you will."

Isabel hesitated, but, glancing up, she saw Billy regarding them steadfastly from the edge of the field. "His head waggles too ominously," she said to Bar-

bara; "and see, he is edging this way. I think, if you don't mind, it would be rather comforting to feel that we have the protection of some one not hampered by petticoats. Mr.——"

"Lawrence Merrill," he replied, readily.

"Oh!" Barbara exclaimed; "then you know Mr. Adams, of course. I've heard him speak of you, and—Isabel, you remember the Water-Color Exhibition last year—you must go back with us, Mr. Merrill. We are here ostensibly to sketch, but it is quite as much to have a little picnic and a good out-of-doors time before we part for the summer. We'll wait for you, of course." He took advantage of the suggestion and hurried off.

"And we never thanked him after all," Isabel said. "I'm glad you didn't tell him that I bought that picture of his, and, oh, dear! I'm glad now that the goat ate up my sketch. No, I'm not—oh, I don't know—I'll make another. Yes, I must make another some time to-day."

"That hint of a picnic is too much for me," Mr. Merrill acknowledged when he returned. "I must admit I'm wofully hungry, and I am going to throw myself upon your tender mercies."

"I can offer you—what did I get, Barbara?—cakes and crackers and cheese and sardines and such things."

"And I have apple-kücken and Frankforters and all sorts of German 'wittles,'" Barbara informed him.

"The vision is too alluring. Am I walking too fast for you? My footsteps hasten unconsciously as I learn what is before me," Mr. Merrill made response.

"Don't tell about the goat," Isabel said, hurriedly,

as they came upon the group spreading out luncheon under the trees.

"Where did they find him?" whispered Madge De-lorme to one of the other girls. "I wonder who he is."

"Some friend of Isabel's, no doubt," Nita Garcia returned.

"Not a bit of it," Madge declared. "Those knickerbockers might belong to one of the four hundred, but that coat never was any one's but an artist's. I am puzzled."

"Lawrie Merrill, as I live!" cried Mr. Adams, jumping up from where he was stretched at ease upon the ground. "Where on earth did you come from?"

"Halloo, Will! I'm in luck to-day. I came off on a lone hunt for a bit of nature, and I stumble upon this delightful surprise party."

"Consider yourself one of us, my dear boy," said Mr. Adams, heartily clapping him upon the shoulder. "Mr. Lawrence Merrill, ladies, a brother artist, and a fellow to help us have a good time. Been working, Lawrie?"

"Just a little. I didn't accomplish very much. May I help to make the coffee, or do anything like that? I'm very willing and obliging."

"Where did you ever meet him? Isn't he a dear?" whispered Madge to Isabel. "I've heard of him, of course; but where did *you* ever know him?"

"Why, he is a friend of the Gardners," replied Isabel, innocently enough, and Madge was satisfied. "It was perfectly true," Isabel said to Barbara afterwards, "and I had to get out of it some way; for Madge is such a chatterbox, and is no respecter of persons. She

would be sure to tease me before mamma or some of them at home, and you know mamma would be perfectly horrified at such an unconventional meeting. She is always railing at the lack of formality among artists, and is desperately afraid that I will disgrace the family some day. It would never have done, of course, to allow any sort of an acquaintance, unless we had known all about Mr. Merrill from Mr. Adams and the Gardners. No one despises more than I do that making of an acquaintance in a chance way, for all mamma's fears."

"This was a different case," Barbara acknowledged. "And I don't believe he is a man to take a mean advantage, anyhow," she added.

"No, I don't imagine he is," Isabel agreed.

The two were busy compounding a dish of lobster salad, for which Mrs. Adams had brought materials. They confided their secret to this good friend, and she assured them that they need have no compunctions. "I'll present him properly after a while," she said, "for he has confided to me that he doesn't know your names, except that the tall one is Isabel and the 'little girl with the Titian hair is Barbara.'"

"Oh, that I had Titian hair!" sighed Isabel. "I know he will ask Barbara to sit for him."

Mrs. Adams laughed, and warned her that she was in danger of spoiling her vaunted lobster salad, and at that moment came a signal from Mr. Adams, who sounded a blast upon a tin horn, and they all flocked to luncheon.

CHAPTER II

THE END OF A DAY

BEFORE the meal was over Mr. and Mrs. Gardner appeared upon the scene, and the fun ran high. Mr. Gardner, Mr. Adams, and Lawrence Merrill were kindred spirits, and were capable of more nonsense than any three men she ever saw, Mrs. Gardner declared, and when they took turns in riding an old cow, in turning hand-springs on the grass, and in performing such fantastic antics as the girls had never seen equalled, they were ready to agree with Mrs. Gardner.

The afternoon sun was making long shadows before any one started to work again, and it was then that Isabel's prophecy was fulfilled, for Mr. Merrill found Barbara too great a temptation for his artistic soul to resist, and he began a sketch of her. "Do you mind my watching you?" Isabel asked. "I have tried so often to get a good study of Miss Palmer, and I have never been able to do her justice. She is so dear. You don't know what a dear child she is."

"She is very young?"

"About nineteen. She came to New York when she was a little over fifteen, and that was more than three years ago. May I sit here? Do you mind?"

"I am honored that you should care to. Mr. Adams tells me that you are hoping to go abroad to study."

"Yes, I want much to go, but my people don't encourage it. They are willing enough that I should

travel, but to go for study is another thing. Have you been over?"

"Yes. I returned only two or three months ago."

"Then, that is why——"

He looked up, smiling. "Go on."

"Why we have not seen you before, I was going to say; but I don't know why I should have seen you, for I do not meet many artists. The Gardners are old friends, and they are my towers of strength. My father is pleased that I should win praise, and allows me to study, but my mother does not approve of it. So, you see——"

"I see. Your friend is impossible. I don't wonder that you despair of a likeness. One might approximate her color, but not her expression. Her face is too changeful."

"I'm so glad to hear you say that. I don't feel so disheartened. You are getting the general character, however, and that is what I always miss. I sometimes manage to get the expression of a single feature, but never of the whole face. That little turn of the neck is perfect. This is a lesson for me, Mr. Merrill," she continued, watching the swift, quick touches. "I wonder will I ever arrive, as the French say."

"If you have persistence, I should say there is no doubt of it. I liked what I saw of your work."

"Sh! don't whisper that. I wouldn't have these girls hear of the goat experience for the world. I ought to be taking an opportunity of sketching now, I suppose. Oh, you are not going to carry that any further? It is very suggestive. I never have sense enough to stop when I ought. I like this. It is more

like Barbara than anything I have yet seen. You are not going to give it to me? Oh, no, I couldn't take it—I——" She paused between protest and desire. It was a bold bit of work, as she had said, only a suggestion, but with the charming lines of Barbara's delicate head and throat, and her exquisite coloring. "I should feel so guilty to deprive you of it," Isabel said at last, unable to resist the offer. "You are too generous."

"I hope this is not the last opportunity that I shall have of sketching Miss Palmer, for she tells me that she is often at Mr. Adams's studio, as well as at the Gardners', and they are all my friends, as you perceive."

"Yes. Then I will take it, with the understanding that if you ever wish it returned to you that you are to say so frankly. Is that agreed upon?"

"If you wish it so, certainly. You are free, Miss Palmer. Thank you very much. You are an excellent model, for you know how to pose."

"I have sat too often for Isabel not to know how," she said, smiling, as she began to gather up her traps preparatory to starting for the train.

"Oh, don't let us hurry," Isabel exclaimed. "Now that the shadows are lengthening, it is the very witching hour for work."

"But the others are going," Barbara returned, pausing undecidedly.

"Let them," rejoined Isabel. "These gem-like, perfect days do not come too often, and I have had such a good time, out of sight of functions and frills, that I don't want to end it. I know what I'll do: I'll persuade the Gardners to stay till a later train. I know they will. If I point out that bewilderingly beautiful

effect over there to Mr. Gardner, he will succumb in a moment." And she moved gayly away, leaving Barbara with Mr. Merrill.

He had likewise paused in the act of putting up his brushes. "Miss Bromley shows both enthusiasm and talent, it seems to me," he said to Barbara.

"Yes, she certainly does," was the reply. "I think if Isabel had been a poor girl she would have accomplished more than she has done. She thinks that she despises her riches, but she cannot well do without her luxuries."

Mr. Merrill nodded. "I can understand the condition of mind, having gone through it myself."

"I can't," Barbara returned; "having never had riches, and not many luxuries, except comparatively speaking. I am rich in comparison to many, I suppose."

"Were you thinking of that saying of Carlyle's: 'the real wealth of a man is the number of things he loves and blesses and by which he is loved and blessed'? or were you thinking of that other wise remark that a person is rich in proportion to the number of things he can do without?"

Barbara looked up brightly. "I wasn't thinking exactly of either of those. I was thinking of those who live from hand to mouth; whose life is a continual fight for actual necessities; food enough to keep them barely alive, and clothes enough to keep their bodies only fairly warm, and then——" She paused, for she was not used to speaking thus freely to strangers.

"Won't you please go on?" said Mr. Merrill.

Barbara's cheeks took on a little flush of embarrass-

ment, but she met such a frank, pleasant smile when she looked at her companion that she did go on. "I was reading, the other day, in a little book that Mrs. Gardner gave me last Christmas, that 'money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul,' and I have so often thought of it since then. I would not give up my powers of appreciating this,"—she made a little movement to indicate their surroundings,—“nor my love of music and poetry and books, for all the houses on Fifth Avenue. All the pictures in the exhibitions belong as much to me as to any one, for even if one should pay money for the possession of them, he could do no more than look at them, and the whole beautiful world is mine to enjoy.”

Isabel had come up, and heard the last words. "My sweet Content," she said, "we are going to stay, as you may have perceived by the settled look on Mr. Gardner's face. What have you and Mr. Merrill been talking about?"

"The vanity of riches," he answered, "and Miss Palmer has shown me so plainly what I would lose by giving up this May evening that you cannot drive me away. I shall stay and sketch. I only needed a word of encouragement, I may add. Excuse me, I must have a word with Mrs. Gardner."

"Oh, Barbara," said Isabel, as the young man passed out of hearing, "I verily believe you have been flirting with him. You demure little wretch, did you ask him to stay?"

"I did nothing of the kind," said Barbara, blushing at the charge. "I only said—I don't know what he means—yes, I do; I said I wouldn't give up my power

of appreciating this loveliness for all the houses on Fifth Avenue. Was that a hint?"

She looked so aggrieved that Isabel laughed heartily. "No, dear Dame Demure, it wasn't. He is a mean creature to suggest such a thing. Let's flaunt him and turn our backs on him. I've a mind to go back, after all. Can't we go hide somewhere while he is talking to Mrs. Gardner? Let's run."

"Where?"

"Over to that funny little dairy-house. We can get behind it."

"And perhaps meet the goat."

"No, I don't believe we shall. I'll risk it. Come, let's hurry. We'll walk down the road with the departing ones and then slip away. Come. Where are my traps?"

They joined Madge and Elsie, who rallied them upon their acquaintance and professed to being quite aggrieved that they had not received an equal share of his attentions. "You are just staying behind because he is," they averred.

"Put it the other way, and you will be nearer right," laughed Isabel. "Good-by, girls; we are going to see what there is in that dairy-house."

They found a comfortable spot in sight of an apple-tree in full bloom. "It is impossible, but I am going to attempt it," Isabel declared. "Oh, Barbara, there is a broken branch. I wonder if we might have some of it. I shall ask that woman over there when I go for water." She made her request, and received the desired permission to help herself; then the two girls

settled to work, and scarcely spoke as their brushes were kept busy.

At the end of half an hour, as Isabel was holding off her sketch at arm's length, some one near them said, "Pretty good, but don't carry it any further."

Isabel dropped the sketch in her lap and looked up. "Oh, it's you," she said. "How did you find us?"

"I saw you go over to speak to that woman over there, and watched you disappear behind this small building; as you did not emerge on the other side, there was but one conclusion to come to."

"Of course. How stupid of me!" said Isabel, in an undertone.

Mr. Merrill laughed. "You can't say that I did not respect your desire to be rid of a third person," he said. "I had designs upon that tree myself, but I found another. I am here now only as Mrs. Gardner's humble messenger. She thinks we should return, for it is getting damp, she declares. I will carry those, please, and will you join us at dinner? Mr. and Mrs. Gardner have been kind enough to say that they will dine with me at a queer little restaurant I know. It is downtown, in an out-of-the-way quarter, and is something of a Bohemian place, but they have the best spaghetti I ever ate, and it is a perfectly quiet, respectable establishment."

"I should be delighted to go, for one," responded Isabel. "You will accept Mr. Merrill's invitation, won't you, Barbara? I am expected at home, but——"

"You can send a telegram," Mr. Merrill quickly interrupted.

"So I can. That will do excellently. I don't often

get a chance to run away, but if I am with Mrs. Gardner, mamma will not say a word. She respects her connections too much ever to object when I say, 'I was with May Gardner, mamma!'"

"Your mother always regards me with such a contemplative look," Barbara remarked. "I am always conscious that she feels as if I were some strange bird which had flown in from a foreign land."

"I have made great boasts of your ancestry," Isabel said, laughing. "You don't know what tales I have told."

"That accounts for it, then," Barbara replied. "I suppose she wonders how it is that the stock has so degenerated."

"No mock modesty," returned Isabel. "That won't do. My respected mamma would never acknowledge that there could be a contradiction to the saying, 'blood will tell.' Alas, our day is over! See, the sun has gone down."

"We needn't call it quite over," Mr. Merrill responded. "I think we can still get something out of it." And so they did, for a deliciously unique little dinner in an unstylish corner of New York was a decided novelty to both the girls, and especially so to Barbara, who had rarely made excursions into the outside world. Her work at the art school, an occasional concert, a luncheon once in a while with Isabel, or an evening with the Gardners, made up the variety of her life.

But after this May-day experience she felt her desire for more expansive influences to stir within her, and the next day when Isabel came in she welcomed

her with more effusion than usual. "I was just wishing for you," she said. "I should like to do yesterday all over again, shouldn't you?"

"I am not sure," was the reply. "They say one should never repeat things like that, for they lose their flavor thereby."

"Perhaps that is true; but, anyhow, I feel like flapping my wings and flying away. I think I will have to go and see Aunt Thankful, for want of a greater change."

"It is the New York influence," returned Isabel. "All New York moves in May, you know, and you have caught the fever. But, oh, Barbara, it would be great fun if we could go off somewhere together, you and I. Let's go to Boston for a couple of weeks and see Sargent's work in the Library."

"Oh," exclaimed Barbara, "how I should love to do it!"

"Why can't you?"

"Am I rolling in wealth? It's easy for you to talk in that flippant way, but I have to count my pennies."

"Do let me count them for you."

Barbara shook her head.

"Please do. I should so love to stand treat."

"No, *ma'am*, I will not. It wouldn't be any fun. But, do you know, if we could do it very cheaply, I might manage it. I still have twenty dollars which I have been saving for some great occasion, and I might call this the opportune moment. Could we do it on twenty dollars?"

"Of course we could, if we were very economical. I'd love to be scrumpy and saving for once in my life."

I'll tell you what we will do, Barbara: I will promise not to spend a penny more than you do, and we will do it all in the very cheapest sort of a way. We can get a room and find our meals wherever we will, and we will stay as long as the money lasts. I am wild to do it. I never had such a chance, for none of the girls would be content to go in any but a very extravagant way."

"Will your mother consent, do you think?"

"She will if papa does, and I can coax him into letting me go. Just now is a very favorable time, for papa and mamma want to go to Chicago."

"Aunt Thankful has some friends in Boston," said Barbara. "I think she knows a highly respectable old lady who has a house somewhere on Beacon Hill near the State-House. I remember that Aunt Thankful went to see her not very long ago. It would be perfectly safe for us to go there. I don't believe her prices would be very high."

"The very thing. That will settle matters beautifully. It was the only point about which I felt dubious. It wouldn't be right for two girls to go to a perfectly strange house, you know. We will consider it a settled thing, then, shall we? When can you go? Next week?"

"Yes, I think so. I'll go out and see Aunt Thankful this very afternoon, and get her friend's address; then we can write and engage our room."

"Isn't it a fine plan? I am so wildly excited I don't know what to do. It will be such a lark. Now let us talk about Mr. Merrill."

Barbara laughed. "Isabel, I believe you are really

smitten with that young man. How long will this condition of mind last?"

"Till I see him again, probably. My fancies usually do last just about that long, but it is fun to imagine each time that this is serious." And they fell to discussing this latest acquisition to their list of acquaintances.

CHAPTER III

TO BOSTON

Two excited girls they were who established themselves on one of the Sound steamers one evening in May. Isabel had decided that one trunk would be sufficient for their needs, and had insisted that Barbara would allow her to bear the expense of that. "Papa always pays such things, anyhow," she said, "so just let us cut that much off and begin with the tickets for the first dip into the twenty dollars," and Barbara had yielded the point. The question of a state-room was the next one. Isabel was inclined to insist upon the most expensive. "We must be comfortable," she said.

"So we must," Barbara replied, "but I don't see why a state-room for which we pay a dollar should not be just as comfortable as one for twice that money. It isn't hot weather, and I suppose the berths are about the same. I see already, Isabel, that I shall have to curb your extravagance at the outset." And Isabel gave up to her.

"Don't you feel as if we were on a voyage of discovery?" she said. "I never was so free in all my life. I have wanted always to do some such thing, and never met a girl with grit enough to join me. Oh, Barbara, you are a joy!"

Barbara smiled. She was used to such exuberant ex-

pressions in Isabel's moments of excitement, and she went on calmly unpacking her necessary articles for the night, as if travelling were no new thing to her. "I shall take the upper berth, unless you prefer it, Isabel," she decided, "for if I were to fall out upon you, it would not be quite so bad as if you were to fall out upon me, for I am so much the smaller of the two." And upon this they agreed.

The next morning found them established in a pleasant third-story room in an old-fashioned house within a stone's throw of the State-House. "It is fine," declared Barbara, looking around her to take in the various appointments. "See that nice big table, and such a deep closet. Isn't Mrs. Abbott the very primmest, neatest old lady you ever saw?"

"Bostonian to the backbone," Isabel replied. "Come, let's hurry and get settled, so we can start forth. I am so anxious to get to the Library and hear what you have to say about it."

"We'll have to ask Mrs. Abbott about a place where we can get good meals, for we had such an early breakfast that we shall want something before we start for the Library." This proved an easy task in one way, for there were boarding-houses innumerable.

"The only trouble is, which to choose," said Isabel. "It will be cheaper to get one of those meal tickets, I suppose, but then we should feel obliged to use that up and we might select the least satisfactory place."

"We'll have to trust to luck. None of them are so very bad, Mrs. Abbott says, so we'll shut our eyes and go it blind, as Roger would say." This they concluded to do, but after a trial of the boarding-house which

they selected, they felt that they might have chosen more wisely.

"Everything is very good but the coffee," Isabel complained. "I positively cannot drink the stuff they serve. It fairly makes me ill." The end of the afternoon had brought them home hungry and tired, and the anticipation of the next meal did not bring Isabel much comfort.

"I'll tell you what we can do," Barbara answered; "we can use up the ticket we bought for all our meals but breakfast, and that we can get in our room. Mrs. Abbott said we might use the gas to boil water over. I asked, and we can make a cup of coffee any time we want to. Let's get some cheap cups and do that."

"So we will," returned Isabel, with a return of animation. "I was just about to give up the cheap idea and back out, Barbara, but you've saved me. I'll not desert you if I can have my coffee. I am so tired after our tramp, but I believe I would be willing to start out again for the sake of a good cup of coffee. Are you too tired to go with me?"

"You poor slave to habit," returned Barbara, playfully. "No, I am not very tired. I was too spiritually uplifted by what I saw to be physically exhausted. I tell you what, Isabel: you stay here and I'll go get the necessities. It is Saturday evening, and all the shops will be open, I imagine. We won't go out to supper, but will have a cosey time by ourselves. No, no, don't protest. I just dote on doing such things."

"You will get lost."

"No, I will not. I am perfectly capable of finding my way; besides, they say that one has only to walk

straight ahead in Boston and he will eventually come back to the place from which he started. You do look quite worn out. Lie down there on the lounge, and I will be back in a jiffy."

"It is so mean to let you go alone," said Isabel, in weak protest, "but——"

"You are tired, and I am not. I am a much better walker than you. Being poor has its advantages, you see, for you ride so often that you tire easily when it comes to walking, while I am used to tramping about. We shouldn't have attempted so much the first day. I know you have a headache; I can tell by your eyes." She had her way, and left Isabel that she might make her discoveries alone.

In about half an hour she returned triumphant. Isabel started up from the lounge as she entered the room. "It is very fortunate that you brought this net bag," said Barbara, as she held up a twine bag, showing many packages. "What do you suppose I have bought at a small outlay? If we could get all our own meals we could make our money last indefinitely. Take care! that is a dish of Boston baked beans. They are fine, I know. I found them at the funniest little bakery. I had to go into the bake-house to get them. There was a huge pot of beans just out of the oven, and they ladled these out of it. That solid package is a loaf of bread, and here is a little jar of cream, and that is the little coffee-pot; the butter is inside; I put it there for safe-keeping. That flat thing is a pie."

"You don't mean to say that you climbed the hill with all those things!" exclaimed Isabel, in astonishment.

"No, not with all. I went to the farthest-off place first and bought the coffee, the cream, and those things; the bake-shop supplies I got just around the corner. Mrs. Abbott will lend us cups and saucers and a knife. Fortunately, we brought two spoons and some sugar. Now we'll have coffee as is coffee."

"Isn't this a true Bohemian meal?" said Isabel, regarding the table with satisfaction. "I am half starved, Barbara; aren't you?"

"Yes, I believe I am. Will you have your coffee with the supper, old-fashioned style, or are you so wedded to the ways of the Philistines that your evening meal must be dinner with a demi-tasse of coffee after?"

"Give it to me at once. I so yearn for it that I will stand on no kind of ceremony. Oh, how good it smells! Nectar for the gods couldn't compare with it. Where did you get that cream? Barbara, you are a marvel of a caterer."

"I've served my apprenticeship. This is a most convenient neighborhood, and I had no trouble in getting supplies. Boston boarding-house coffee may be poor, but there is certainly a fine quality to be had in the shops. Spread your bread and let me have the knife. We can have some eggs and coffee and Boston brown bread for breakfast, and you needn't go out till it is time to start for church."

"Shade of John Hancock, but these beans are good!" exclaimed Isabel. "Is it the subtle influence of the place,—for I believe this house stands on what was once a part of John Hancock's property,—or is it that I am so starved?"

"I think it is a little of both," Barbara answered, taking a spoonful of beans upon her wooden plate. "I don't think I'd like this as a steady thing, but for a change it's mighty good."

"We'll go to the new Old South to-morrow, shall we?" asked Isabel.

"Yes, and to Trinity, where Phillips Brooks was rector. We can walk there right across the Common."

"I don't see how you know all that so well. Every one says Boston is such a puzzling place to find one's way about in, and you have never been here before."

"No, but I have spent hours studying that map of yours in the guide-book, and I think I know pretty well about the directions from this point."

"And Monday, where shall we go?"

"To Cambridge. I want to see Harvard College; but oh, dear! there is so much I want to see."

"Well, we don't have to do it all at once, you know. Where is that guide-book? We'll consult that and plan out our outings. We must go to Salem and Marblehead and Gloucester. They are such odd, quaint old places, you will like to see them."

"I think we would best take every other day for the long trips and the between ones for Boston proper, and then we will not get so tired out."

"Wise girl. You have such a deal of judgment for so small a body, Barbara. Now, I just fly ahead and do whatever comes first without thinking of the consequences. Where did you learn to be so wise?"

"I suppose," she returned, thoughtfully, "from having to depend so much upon myself. You know grandfather is so absent-minded, and I lost my mother when

I was very young, and so I have had to be self-reliant. And then there are Roger and Helen; I have always had them on my mind."

Isabel leaned over and kissed her, with a sudden welling up of sympathy. "I wish I had a big brother, Barbara," she said. "I'd love to have you for a sister."

Barbara laughed. "What a delightful possibility it would suggest, and how unkind of you not to have a brother! Can't you adopt one?"

Isabel shook her head. "It wouldn't do. I'll have to arrange something else."

"And, of course, I'll meekly do your bidding, and be led like a lamb to the sacrifice. No, Miss Isabel, I'm not going to marry. I've too much else to do in life."

"So I say," returned Isabel; "but one never knows. I find so many who insist that they are going to do this or that, and, after all, turn around and do exactly the opposite; so I just drift along. It is much the easiest way. What shall it be for Monday? Here we sit, guide-book neglected, while we moon away about such foolish things as men and marriage."

"My, how superior! It is the Boston influence. Don't take to lecturing, Isabel, whatever you do. You'd look rather well upon the platform, but I'd hate to see you there. Now let us settle about Monday. Shall it be Salem? I think so; and Tuesday we'll take Cambridge. Now let's go to bed."

Monday morning found them ready for the ride to Salem, and by ten o'clock they were wandering about the sleepy old town, and finally brought up at the Essex Institute. "It is a perfect treasure-trove of things

quaint and antique," said Isabel, lingering over the dingy reminders of a by-gone period. "I love these queer skillets and bellows and kettles; don't you?"

"I do, indeed," was the response, spoken in so deep a tone that Isabel turned suddenly in surprise, and found that Barbara had moved on and that the reply to her question was given by Lawrence Merrill.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "Of all things! How came you to be here?"

"I have some illustrating to do for a publisher in Boston, and came on to Salem to look up some material I want. I am delighted to have run across you. Is Miss Palmer with you?"

"Yes; she is over there looking at those funny old bonnets. We are staying in Boston, but are here for the day. Isn't it a drowsy old town? We got our lunch at that place where there is a dear old man in a skull-cap and an old lady with such white hair. We are seeing how cheaply we can do this trip, and were recommended to go there."

"Oh, yes, I know the place. I have just come from there. I spent the morning here taking notes, and came back to verify something I didn't have quite clearly set down. What shall you do this afternoon?"

"We'll find enough here to occupy us. We want to see the House of the Seven Gables and the old Witch House."

"That will not take you half an hour; then what?"

"I don't know. Barbara, here is Mr. Merrill, and he wants to know what we are going to do this afternoon."

"Do? We're going to do Salem."

Mr. Merrill laughed. "How far are you in the process?"

"I don't know. I could spend days in this place, myself. We are likely to be here for a couple of hours, I should think."

"Then, may I come here for you at—let me see—at four o'clock?"

Barbara looked at Isabel. She did not like this interruption to the day's plans, but Isabel responded graciously, "Certainly. Are you going to offer us some surprise in the way of a curious sight that we have overlooked?"

"No; but I thought it might be more comfortable if you could return to Boston under my escort. There is such a rush and scramble for the cars in the evening, and a man is sometimes of use on such occasions."

The girls laughed. "He penetrates our scorn of the sex," said Barbara. "We are in Massachusetts, Mr. Merrill, and are imbibing all sorts of isms. Isabel is thinking of lecturing at the next woman's rights convention, and I am not sure yet whether I shall join her or not."

"No matter what you do, so long as I may be allowed, like Mary's little lamb, to 'hoppee 'long too,' as the Chinaman said. Are you going to be too tired to go somewhere this evening?"

"I shall be," returned Barbara, promptly.

"And we do not feel that we can call upon Mrs. Abbott to chaperon us," said Isabel, sedately.

Mr. Merrill looked a little taken aback. "I forgot we were not in Bohemia," he said. "You will pardon me, I hope, and let me call upon you. Would it be be-

yond the bounds of decorum if I were to ask you to visit some of the studios with me? I have a number of artist friends here. Some of them are very jolly fellows, and do some very good work."

Even Barbara could not withstand this. "We should love to go, and—— Don't you think we might, Isabel?"

"Ye-es, I think so," she answered. "To-morrow afternoon we might, perhaps."

"Then shall we call it settled?" Mr. Merrill asked. "Auf wiedersehn! I will be back here by four, and we'll go see the Witch House."

"He didn't ask to call in New York," remarked Isabel, as he disappeared. "I wonder why; and I wonder if it is right to allow it now."

"I believe he was afraid of your Fifth Avenue surroundings," returned Barbara. "I think the confession that we were doing this on a cheap scale was what appealed to him. He didn't dare venture within the tents of the Philistines in New York. As for allowing him to call on us here, I should think it would be quite proper, for we are really under Mrs. Abbott's protection, since she is a friend of Aunt Thankful's and we know all about her and she knows all about us."

"Well, he is very nice," said Isabel, quite seriously, "but I don't believe you are glad we met him. You didn't look so."

"I am not glad. I think it is too bad to have a man come interfering with our nice sociable plans. You always have a lot of men tagging after you at home wherever you go, and here I thought we should be rid of them."

"Such men! Perfectly inane creatures that I despise. This one is different."

"And that is why you like him? Well, my dear, you may make yourself as charming as you please. I'll not try to."

"Now, Barbara, you are cross."

"Yes, I am. I hope he isn't going to stop here all the time that we are here. Did he say when he was going back?"

"No; but you'll like to see the studios, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll like that, but I don't care how soon he goes after he has taken us to them."

"I thought you liked artists."

"I do, in their proper place; but when they come upsetting all my pleasant prospects I don't like them. I wish he wasn't going back with us." She looked really as if she had borrowed Roger's cloudy face, and Isabel was quite distressed.

"Oh, well, we needn't go to-morrow," she said; "but after his being so kind and polite, I don't think it would be exactly nice of us to be offish."

Barbara made a tour of the room and then came back to where Isabel was looking at some pieces of old silverware. The younger girl smiled up at her friend. "Don't let me spoil our good time by being cross, Isabel," she said. "I was mean and hateful. After all, what difference can an hour or so make, when we have the whole twenty-four? I believe I was jealous, and that is all. I ought to love you too much to want to rob you of any pleasure, and I'll be as good as pie, I promise you."

"You are a dear thing, Barbara," returned Isabel.

“ I am so glad you are not going to be grumpy. You hardly ever are, you know. Were you jealous, dear? There is not a man living who could make me love you less, or who could ever be as companionable as you are;” which, in a measure, was true, yet Barbara answered, gravely,—

“ One does not always love more or less, but with a difference;” which was a truer statement of the case than Isabel’s.

CHAPTER IV

A CHANCE MEETING

MR. MERRILL was on hand all too promptly for Barbara's convenience. She was still shy of strangers, and rather dreaded the visit to the studio of Mr. Merrill's friend. Isabel, however, was in her element, and donned her prettiest toilet, so that Barbara declared herself quite cast in the shade.

"If I had your coloring I shouldn't care what I wore," Isabel retorted. "I look like a nobody in plain clothes; so tacky and ordinary. As mamma says, I 'take dress,' while you look best in quiet attire. Every one will look at your lovely hair and eyes, and I will be nowhere." But at no time was Isabel nowhere. She was too full of life, too much at home in a crowd, to practise self-repression, and she was soon the centre of a lively group, while Barbara was satisfied to sit in a corner and look over some sketches with Mr. Merrill. To be sure, Isabel, more than once, cast an interested glance in her direction, but she seemed so ready with repartee and so occupied with her new friends, that Barbara did not venture to join her till the time came for them to go. Isabel spoke little to her on the way home; she gave her attention strictly to Mr. Merrill, and Barbara withdrew into her shell, and did not attempt to take part in the conversation.

"If I were only bright and witty like Isabel," she thought, "I should so enjoy going about, but some persons have the effect of shutting me up like a clam,

and I am uncomfortable and conscious. I am so before some of these Boston women." She was busily thinking over her shortcomings, and had unconsciously dropped behind the other two. Presently she was startled by hearing some one at her side say, "Are you in such a brown study that you will not speak to old friends, Miss Barbara? I have been walking alongside of you for five minutes, and you have not given me a glance."

"Why, Mr. Vandermeer, who in the world would have thought of seeing you here? Did you know that we were in Boston?"

"Yes, but I did not know that I should see you here. I found the family all away when I returned to New York, and then I called upon your grandfather, who told me of your flight with Isabel. How are you enjoying Boston?"

"Very much. Yes, very much. I shouldn't care to live here, perhaps, but it is a very interesting place to visit, and, besides, you know I have travelled so little that I am alive with curiosity. It has the charm of novelty."

"Yes, it would have that. An uneventful life has its compensations. It is a poor plan to outlive one's enthusiasms."

Barbara smiled. "I am not likely ever to do that. Now, when I want very much to go anywhere, I always comfort myself with the thought, That's one more pleasant thing to anticipate."

He gave her an answering smile. "That is a very fine philosophy. I wish I had practised it earlier. I get very tired of places, but, if I remain long in one,

a restless spirit takes possession of me, and off I go again."

Barbara looked thoughtful. "Perhaps if you had a home, you would not get restless," she said, after a pause. "I should think life in a hotel would be very unsatisfactory. I'd get so very tired of myself if I lived alone in that way."

"So you would," he said, eagerly. "That is just how it is. There, Isabel has just come to a realizing sense that you are missing. See how surprised she looks." They came up laughing, while the two ahead waited for them.

"Of all things! Where did you drop from, Uncle Henry?" Isabel exclaimed. "How long have you been tagging on behind us with Barbara?"

"For ten minutes, perhaps, and I came up on the Sound steamer last night."

Isabel presented him to Mr. Merrill, and they continued their walk through the Common. "I looked you up," Mr. Vandermeer told Barbara, "but was told you had gone out. You thought you must be on historic ground, I suppose. You are under the very shadow of the State-House."

"Yes, we thought it would be a convenient neighborhood, and it is a friend of my aunt's with whom we are staying."

Mr. Vandermeer nodded. "I didn't come to spy on you, but I'd like to try to help you have a good time."

Barbara gave a little half-smile.

"Why do you look so amused?"

"Because it is so funny. We ran off to have a trip

all to ourselves, and you are the second person who has come upon us."

"And interrupted your good time?"

"No, I wasn't going to be so impolite as to say that, but it does seem funny."

"I will leave you this minute, if you say so, and, moreover, I will drag Mr. Merrill with me. Who is he, by the way? A Boston acquaintance?"

"No, that is the funny part of it. We met him a couple of weeks ago in New York. He is a friend of the Gardners."

"Then it is assumed that he is safe. I don't think that Isabel looks as if she much objected to being interrupted."

"No, she doesn't, and that is what makes me out of sorts. She rather enjoys him, and—and——"

"You are a companionless third? I see. Well, then, if Mr. Merrill is inevitable, you, perhaps, will be willing to take me into the party, and you and I can hunt together. We can keep a severe eye upon the other couple, and have our own good time into the bargain."

"Uncle Henry, I'm rather glad you have come," came an interruption from Isabel. "How long are you going to stay?"

"As long as I find a field for my special talents. Have you anything for me to do? I believe you generally find a way to make me useful."

"Yes, I have something in mind. I'll tell you later. Are you going to take us somewhere to dinner? We have been living on baked beans and brown bread."

"Oh, Isabel," protested Barbara.

"Well, not altogether, but we did make two meals of them. Where are you staying, Uncle Henry?"

"At the Parker House. Yes, I shall be delighted to have you join me at dinner. Mr. Merrill, I hope, will not desert us."

Isabel turned a questioning look upon the young man. "You will not desert us, Mr. Merrill?"

"Not if I can add to the pleasure of the party. For myself, the prospect of a lonely dinner is not a very happy one, and I don't need a great deal of encouragement. You may have observed a like tendency in me before."

"Then it is settled. We will all go with you, thank you, Uncle Henry, and then we can talk over that other matter."

"This is certainly an improvement on our boarding-place," Barbara said an hour later.

"Uncle Henry always does know just what to order," returned Isabel. "That is one reason why I like to go out with him; I know everything will be just as it should. Please stay till Friday, Uncle Henry. We are invited to a sort of a—what is it, Mr. Merrill?"

"A studio frolic; nameless, I suppose. Mr. Hunt is going abroad next week, and his friends are invited to his studio for a farewell evening. I believe they are to go in costume,—at least the ladies are,—in order to add to the effect. The studio is a very attractive one, and one is always sure of having a good time there. Miss Bromley questioned the propriety of going without some one of her family or an older lady, so you have appeared just in time."

"You will go, won't you, Uncle Henry?"

"Why, yes, I don't object. I know Hunt. Met him in Paris a couple of years ago."

"Uncle Henry knows everybody," Isabel told Mr. Merrill; and the matter was arranged to every one's satisfaction.

"I don't think our trip has turned out a bit as we expected it would," complained Barbara to Isabel, that evening when they had reached their room.

"Well, it doesn't matter, so long as we have a good time, does it?"

"No-o, but——"

"Aren't you having a good time?"

"Oh, yes, but not the kind of a time we meant to have, nor just the kind of a time that I——" She stopped, for she would not obtrude her preferences.

"I know, dear," said Isabel, taking her friend's face between her hands; "but, Barbara, I'm having such a delicious time. I am, dear. I never had such a free foot, as my old nurse used to say, and it was getting to be very depressing to go to that boarding-house for all our meals."

"But," said Barbara, in consternation, "are we going to do anything different? We can't."

"Oh, yes, we can. Uncle Henry will always take us to dinner. He is really very nice, Barbara, and not so dreadfully old. I don't think he is much over thirty."

"That is rather old," said Barbara, from the standpoint of nineteen.

"He is the youngest of a family of six," said Isabel,

"and mamma is the eldest. At all events, he is a dear fellow, and he will see that we have a lovely time."

"But you see, he isn't my uncle."

"No, but he likes you very much. He hardly ever takes the trouble to talk to a girl as much as I have seen him talk to you."

"He knew my father, you know."

"To be sure he did. I always forget that. Then that is reason enough for you to feel perfectly willing to let him include you in the things he does for me while we are here. You are the daughter of his friend, and that is probably the way he feels about it."

Barbara was satisfied, and yielded to the situation.

But after their light was out and only the moonlight was shining in their room, Isabel said, "Mr. Merrill likes you, too, Barbara, much better than he does me."

"What utter nonsense!" returned Barbara, sleepily.

"No, it isn't. He talked to you all the time at the studio."

"Because there was no one else to talk to me," returned Barbara, rousing. "I am sure you were chattering away as fast as could be, and needed no one to entertain you. I'm such a mouse in company."

"So you are, dear. What did he talk about?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. Pictures, and—Miss Bromley."

"Did he really?"

"Yes."

Isabel gave her a mighty hug. "Bless you, Barbara! I'll devise you the loveliest costume for Friday night. I've thought it all out."

"Oh, I can't go in costume. I can't buy anything for one, you know."

"Only a few yards of cheese-cloth, mousie dear, for a Greek dress. You'll look so dear in it, with your pretty white throat and arms. I couldn't wear one at all, for I'd look like such a guy, so I will send home for my Dutch dress, the one with the long sleeves, and wear that so as not to show my skinny arms. The cheese-cloth will cost very little, and we'll save on the dinners, you know."

Barbara laughed. "All right. I'll get the cheese-cloth."

"White, creamy white, it must be, and with your hair done up as I know how to do it, you'll be the belle of the evening. See if you are not. Now let us go to sleep, so as to be ready for Plymouth Rock tomorrow."

The cheese-cloth costume certainly was a success, as every one declared, and Barbara hardly knew herself, so great was the enthusiasm over her appearance. "Stunning? I should say so," was Mr. Merrill's comment. "Miss Palmer, I must have a sitting in this dress when we get back to New York. Did you ever see anything finer than that effect, Hunt? Here, Miss Palmer, just lean against this piece of drapery. Doesn't that bring out the flesh tints?" And so on, till Barbara declared she could stand it no longer, and begged Mr. Vandermeer to rescue her from these clamorous artists.

"But you are an artist yourself," he said, as he piloted her to a quiet corner.

"Hardly one yet. At all events, I like to be the observer and not the observed."

He looked at her with the sudden brightening of his face which she had before noticed. "You are not like other girls," he remarked.

"No, I am painfully aware of it. I never know how to keep the ball of conversation rolling, and say those witty things which come so easily to Isabel. I enjoy looking on."

"But you observe very closely. I have noticed that, and in a quiet hour you would not be silent."

"No, I can talk to one person fast enough sometimes. I am always quietest in a crowd. I am glad they like the dress, for Isabel is so pleased that they do, but I feel so silly to be made to pose for a beauty when it is simply Isabel's taste in making the dress hang so well. Don't let's talk about me any more. Tell me about some of the wonderful places you have seen. You promised once to tell me of your trip to Hawaii."

"Hark! some one is going to sing. We will be quiet and listen. Hawaii can wait."

Barbara leaned back against the cushions of the divan on which they were sitting, and listened, her eyes upon the scene before her. The studio with its rich furnishings made a proper setting for the company in their picturesque dresses, and the little French song, which a pure sweet tenor voice was singing, seemed just the thing for the time and place. Then there arose the strong full tones of a 'cello, and Barbara leaned forward. Suddenly she seemed to hear her grandfather practising his favorite music; she saw

the blue Potomac, and smelled the locust-blossoms which came in May time in her old home in Maryland. There was a tender, half-sad expression upon her face, and her lips took a sorrowful curve.

Mr. Vandermeer, watching her, thought, "It is a good little face. There is a beautiful soul behind it." And he, too, sighed as the music ceased.

Barbara turned to him instantly. "Does it make you sad, too?" she whispered, softly. "It reminds me of my grandfather and of my old home. Dear grandfather, I hope he does not miss me. He has Helen and Boggie, to be sure. Roger is so much to him now, and I am so glad."

"It makes me sad, yes, a little. I think a good composition of any sort brings one face to face with one's true self, and makes him realize his shortcomings. I am a useless sort of a creature."

"Are you?" The childlike eyes were reproachful, he thought. "Why need you be?"

"I don't know. Simply because I've no impulse to make me different, I suppose."

"And yet there is so much to do in this world," said Barbara, thoughtfully.

"Is there? What?"

"Oh, so much. One could study, and then help others who have no way of learning; and there are so many, many ways of doing good. There are numbers of persons who have no time to help make the world better, but who are very eager to do their part, and because they have to earn their bread and butter they can only do a very little; they have so little time from their necessary labor. I've often thought——"

"Please go on," he said, in a low tone.

"I've often thought, if I were very rich, that I would give my time to looking after those things that need attention: the charities; the free kindergartens; the institutions like hospitals. Think how very much good one could do in a single day at a hospital where such weary, weary hours must be spent by those who can only lie still and suffer. And then there are one's own invalid friends. One always knows some who need a visit,—a little of the outside world brought to them. We are always so ready to do things for our well friends, who perhaps don't need entertaining, and we forget the sick and the lonely ones. There is Mr. Merrill bringing me an ice, and it is high time that something came to stop my talking. Have I not carried out your opinion of me? I certainly must have talked one person to death."

"To life, it is more likely. I needed it, and I thank you."

"What did you find to say to Uncle Henry? He was listening with all his ears," said Isabel to her that night. "Never tell me again that you can't talk."

Barbara looked confused. "I hadn't any business to lecture him," she said. "I am afraid I was very disrespectful to say what I did to a man so much older than I."

"Were you lecturing him? I cannot imagine such a thing."

"Why, yes, I was. I told him what I would do if I were a rich man."

Isabel looked vastly amused. "You must tell me

some time. Did you enjoy the evening? You ought to have; you were the admiration of every one. I knew you would be. Don't be too lovely, Barbara."

"Why what do you mean?"

But Isabel would not make any explanation.

CHAPTER V

AT AUNT THANKFUL'S

THE week which followed was full of pleasant excursions in and around Boston, and Barbara, for the first time in her life, experienced the comfort afforded by the escort of a thoughtful, well-informed man of the world, for Mr. Vandermeer made her his especial charge, and her eager mind absorbed much knowledge of things literary and historical. Mr. Merrill had a boyish love of fun, and Mr. Vandermeer possessed a quiet sense of humor, so that theirs was not a solemn company by any means.

"I never had such a lovely time in all my life," sighed Isabel, on the day of their departure for home. "When I have gone anywhere with mamma and papa, it has always been so formal and uninteresting. Mamma never cares for the things that please me, and it is so stupid dragging around the shops, or spending one's time perched up in a hotel listening to small talk. Uncle Henry has sometimes gone away with us in the summer, but I never knew he could be so jolly and unconventional. It is as if he had never shown his true self before. I just dread to go back home, and yet I am ashamed to say so."

"Suppose your mother and father are still in Chicago, what will you do at home alone?"

"Oh, Uncle Henry will be there, and the servants are all in force, but—you couldn't come and stay with me, could you?"

Barbara hesitated. "I don't know. I hardly think so. Helen is at Aunt Thankful's, and I promised to go there as soon as I should get back. It is such a nice old place to be in. Aunt Thankful is queer, but she is as good as gold, and one doesn't mind her little peculiarities after one is used to them. I wish you would come there, Isabel. She likes you, and we could have such fine times sketching together."

"I'd love it," Isabel exclaimed, enthusiastically, "but I should not like to go without a special invitation from Miss Ray. I wish papa and mamma would decide to take a longer trip. I believe they would go to the Yellowstone if I could be satisfactorily provided for. Mamma doesn't care to go, but papa has wanted to for ever so long, and mamma won't leave him, now they are started. Perhaps your Aunt Thankful would let me board with her. Would she, do you think?"

Barbara shook her head. "No, she wouldn't do that, I am sure. I think, perhaps, that I can manage it some other way."

This she succeeded in doing, for Aunt Thankful was the proudest sort of a body, and could not bear the idea that any one belonging to her should be under obligations to comparative strangers, and therefore, when Barbara gave a glowing account of her good times, and told how Mr. Vandermeer had contributed to her pleasure, Aunt Thankful's face took on a sharply meditative expression.

"They have all been very good to me," Barbara went on to say, "and have entertained me a great deal. I wish I could return it somehow. I did make a pretty good study of Isabel for Mr. Bromley, and he was

greatly pleased, but I can't do anything further. If I had a home of my own, now——"

"What would you do?" asked Aunt Thankful, quickly.

"I'd invite Isabel to come to me during the time her parents are away."

"Humph! she'd want more than you could do for her: hot water lugged to her room half a dozen times a day; her breakfast in bed, and a dozen servants to wait on her; besides late dinners with *entrées* and *fal-lals* that you couldn't supply."

"Indeed, then, Aunt Thankful, she would not. Isabel has all sorts of luxuries in her own home, of course, but you should have seen her in Boston; she was as contented with our plain way of living as I was, and she didn't fuss about anything but the coffee, and that was something beyond anything I ever tasted for sloppiness."

"Humph! I don't blame her for fussing then." Coffee was a weak point with Aunt Thankful. "What sort of a room did you have?"

"Oh, a nice, plain sort of a room on the third floor. It was a back room, and we were rather glad of it, for we could put our various articles of food out on the window-sill and not be afraid of offending the passers-by."

"And you two roomed together?"

"Yes, indeed; we couldn't afford two rooms."

"Couldn't afford, with all the money the Bromleys have."

"Oh, but you know, Isabel wouldn't spend a cent

more than I did, and it made it much pleasanter for me."

"Very sensible. She has a nice face. I like her looks. What's the uncle like? Up in middle life, I suppose."

"Yes," responded Barbara, innocently; "he isn't young."

"And the other man,—Merrill, did you say his name is?—what is he like?"

"Oh, he's very nice and jolly, and not a bit airish. He's like most artists, and doesn't care for conventionalities; I mean for fashionable life, and such things, but he is entirely well-bred. He impresses one very favorably, I think."

"One of the kind that strikes twelve the first time," returned Aunt Thankful. "Probably he won't wear well."

"I think he will. He hasn't shown a cloven foot yet, and we saw a good deal of him." She arose to go out on the porch where Helen was swinging in the hammock.

"Here, wait a minute," said Aunt Thankful. "I don't suppose it will put me out to have another youngster here, and if you think Miss Bromley can stand me, I can stand her. Ask her to come here and stay while her people are away."

"Oh, Aunt Thankful, may I?"

"I said so, didn't I?"

"Yes, and thank you very, very much, Aunt Thankful." She went to her aunt and put her arms around her.

"Tut! tut!" said Aunt Thankful, not ill-pleased. "You needn't make any fuss over it."

"May I go in to-morrow and bring her back with me?"

"If you choose. Remember, I warn you, I'll not change my way of living one whit."

"Indeed, I wouldn't have you," responded Barbara, warmly. "It is good enough for any one, and Isabel will be perfectly delighted I know." She started toward the door, but turned with her hand on the knob. "Aunt Thankful," she said, "I must confess, I hoped you would ask her to come."

Aunt Thankful smiled grimly. She liked Barbara because of her always honest confessions. "I can get along with people who don't pretend," she said, "and Barbara Palmer is as transparent as the day. She couldn't do a covert thing without announcing it the next minute, and that suits me to a dot." So now she uttered no word of criticism, and Barbara went out to join Helen.

"Your legs and arms are growing so fast that I shall have to do something to them," she said as she established herself by the side of her little sister. "You are going to be taller than I am, Helen."

"Am I? Like Miss Isabel? I hope I will be as tall as she is."

"I shouldn't be surprised if you were. By the way, Isabel is coming here to make a visit."

"Good!" cried Helen; "and Roger is coming up with grandfather to spend Sunday, and I expect Mr. Karl will be back by Saturday, and maybe he will come, too. Won't it be fun? I love to have a lot of

company. I'm glad I had the measles, so I had to come here before the summer holidays. If I had been well we should have had to stay in the city all through June."

Barbara shook her head gently. "You ought to like to go to school," she said, gravely.

"I don't mind it so very much, but I like best to be here."

"And you like Aunt Thankful?"

"Yes, but she is very funny sometimes. See, there she comes now with her basket and shears. I expect she is going to cut roses. I'm going with her."

"Put on your hat, then. Your eyes must be shaded carefully till they are quite strong."

"Have you seen anything of my flock of turkeys, Barbara?" asked Aunt Thankful. "They will wander away, and I have a difficulty in keeping track of them."

"No, I haven't seen them," was the reply. "Is it a large flock, Aunt Thankful? I'll go and hunt them for you."

"There are two," replied Aunt Thankful, blandly, "and you'll be likely to find them in the orchard."

Barbara turned away to hide a smile. "Shall I drive them up?" she asked.

"No, you needn't do that, but just keep an eye on them. I don't want them to get off in the woods."

Barbara picked up her writing-materials and her hat, and went down the path to the orchard. Aunt Thankful had many old-fashioned ways, and was now going forth to gather roses for the still, for she made her own rose-water, and her garden supplied her with the herbs and fruits which she carefully dried. She wore a small

white cap, and "inside handkerchief," as she called it, and her appearance was a perfect delight to Isabel, who declared her to be "delicious."

Barbara had decided to send Isabel a note, for the charm of the country in June was upon her, and she hated to think of city streets; therefore she spent her afternoon in the orchard, after having despatched her note. Isabel's reply came without delay, and the next afternoon found Barbara preparing to meet her.

"You had better take the chaise," Aunt Thankful said, for so she always designated her old buggy; "and be careful not to drive too fast. I don't like Dolly to be overheated," as if fat Dolly, who never, with the utmost urging, could be made to go beyond a slow trot, could get overheated, thought Barbara. "You will be careful?" continued Aunt Thankful, anxiously, as Barbara drove off. "You are sure you can manage her?"

"Why, Aunt Thankful, I have driven a horse ever since I was three or four years old," Barbara replied. "Before we came to New York I used to go out every day."

"Yes, yes, to be sure; but I was afraid you might be a little out of practice."

Barbara threw a mirthful look to Helen, standing with her hands full of roses, and drove off at a most sedate pace.

But she had not gone far before she heard the cry of "Wait! Wait!" and, looking back, she saw Aunt Thankful energetically waving her apron. She therefore drew the lines to attend to any further charges.

"Be very careful not to go too near the cars," called

Aunt Thankful. "Dolly might take affright and run away with you."

"Is she afraid of the cars?"

"No, she doesn't seem to be, but she might take a sudden fancy that way. You can never tell what a horse will do."

"I'll be careful," returned Barbara, and she jogged along, a smile playing about her lips.

"I don't wonder that Aunt Thankful has to get up at daylight when she wants to come to town," she thought, "for at this gait it will be some hours before we reach the station. I believe the train is coming now." But this proved a false alarm, although the train bearing Isabel to the place had left the station when Barbara drove up.

"Isn't this enchanting?" cried Isabel. "Oh, Barbara, I was never more pleased than when I got your note. Is it far to Miss Ray's?"

"No, only about two miles. This very elegant rig will take you there in due course of time. I was charged not to drive fast, you see."

Isabel's eyes were full of a merry appreciation of the horse and vehicle.

"This is the wonderful 'one-hoss shay,'" Barbara went on. "I think it must have been in the family for generations, and the horse, too. Isn't she fat and lazy? I don't believe she has ever been driven off a dog-trot in her life. When Aunt Thankful is driving, she stops whenever she or Dolly feels inclined, and she allows Dolly to nibble bits of grass or do anything of the kind at will. In fact, I believe if Dolly took it into her head not to go a certain road, Aunt Thankful would

put off her business in that direction, for that day, at least."

"She is a dear; I just love her!" cried Isabel. "Aren't the lanes lovely this time of year? Oh, Barbara, I mustn't forget that Uncle Henry wants to know if he may come out some day. He says his aunt used to know your Aunt Thankful when she was young. She is my great-aunt, you know, and she lives in New Jersey. I must try to go and see her some day. She is quite an invalid, and rarely goes out. I am afraid none of us go there as often as we should. I never knew Uncle Henry to go before. I wonder what started him. She is not well off, and—well, I ought to take matters in my own hands and go whenever I can. I promised Uncle Henry I would go down with him next week."

"Your uncle is not very much like your mother, is he?" said Barbara, thoughtfully.

Isabel smiled. "No, he is not, for I know what you mean. Mamma is a butterfly of fashion. Poor dear! I wish her world had wider limits. She has many good qualities, you know, Barbara."

"Oh, Isabel, please don't think I meant to censure her."

"I know you didn't, but I am aware of how her point of view and yours must differ. Mamma is generous and kind, a devoted wife and mother, and a loyal friend, but she doesn't understand her daughter, whose ambition differs so materially from hers. We've talked this over before so often, and it is always the same. I've often wondered what would happen if papa were suddenly to become very poor."

"Aunt Thankful says it would be a blessing to you."

"Perhaps. I think it would be one to Uncle Henry if he had to work for his living. He needs something to make him have an aim in life. I fancy he is often dissatisfied with himself."

"He is. He has told me so."

"He has been quite a student, and has written a little for the magazines, in a *dilettante* way, and he has travelled extensively, but I don't believe he ever earned a penny in his life."

"I think that is very sad," said Barbara, in perfect honesty.

Isabel laughed. "So it is, from your point of view, but it isn't from the world's stand-point. Mamma exults in it. Still, I think if Uncle Henry had been differently situated, he might have made his mark. He wanted to go into the navy when he was a lad, but his mother objected. He was her youngest born, and she couldn't bear to be parted from him."

"That was selfish."

"Of course it was. What is called affection is often nothing more than selfishness, I find. It is the enjoyment of an object; not the devotion to that object for its own happiness, or for its own best good."

"My, how deep we are getting!"

"Yes; it is constant association with a young person, one Barbara Palmer, who stirs my thoughts continually. I never knew how to think till I knew her."

"Now, Isabel," began Barbara, deprecatingly, "it is not I at all, for I think we both owe to Mr. Adams and the Gardners more than we owe to each other."

"Maybe. I'll be honest and confess it. Perhaps

we'd better say that our study of art has made us perceptive of the spiritual as well as the material. Will that do?"

"Yes, I think so. Here we are at the first gate. This is a long lane, and it has many turnings. Can you drive through without hitting the gate-post? If you can't, you can just hold the lines, for Dolly knows enough to avoid stumps and stakes." And in a few minutes they had halted at Aunt Thankful's door.

CHAPTER VI

COMPANY

AUNT THANKFUL greeted her guest with old-time courtesy. She was ushered into the drawing-room, a dignified and formal place, but full of antique furniture and queerly ancient ornaments. Here she was regaled upon currant shrub and pound-cake before Barbara was allowed to conduct her up-stairs into the old-fashioned bedroom whose windows gave glimpses of green fields beyond which stretched a line of sparkling water.

"Isn't it the dearest place?" cried Isabel, looking around upon the various objects in the room,—the four-posted bedstead, the tall bureau with its bulging front and brass-handled drawers, the braided rugs upon the floor, the dimity curtains, and the straight-backed chairs.

"Helen and I are next to you," Barbara told her. "We have early tea and a mid-day dinner. No frills here, as Roger says. A serge skirt and a shirt-waist will be your proper costume for most occasions."

"Delightful!"

"You may dress up on Sundays, if you like, and on high days and holidays, but don't come sailing down in evening dress as you do at home. Aunt Thankful would be scandalized."

"I'll remember; but you make me half afraid of her."

"You needn't be; only I warn you not to be too dressy. Are you ready? Shall we go down? I want to show you the garden."

It did not take Isabel long to adapt herself to these new surroundings. She showed a pretty humility about some things, but her natural imperiousness would sometimes assert itself; then Aunt Thankful would meet the occasion with, "Hoity-toity, miss! In my young days girls of your age knew better than to toss their heads and put on such disdainful looks before their elders. Pride goes before a fall, they used to tell me." And then Isabel would laugh and come down from her high horse.

Saturday brought quite a host of visitors. First, Mr. Vandermeer arrived. "Here comes Uncle Henry," Isabel announced from the porch where they were all sitting.

Aunt Thankful's glance took in the approaching figure, then she turned indignantly to Barbara. "I thought you told me he was a middle-aged man," she said.

"Well, so he is, isn't he?" returned Barbara, innocently.

"He can't be more than thirty, from his looks."

"He is about that, maybe a little older. I should call any one over thirty middle-aged."

Aunt Thankful laughed. "I call it pretty young. I suppose it depends upon which side of thirty you are yourself." Nevertheless, she welcomed Mr. Vandermeer heartily, and at once became interested in hearing of her old friend, Miss Caroline Wilmer.

"Poor Aunt Caroline, she is a great sufferer," Mr.

Vandermeer told them. "She fell from a carriage and injured her back some years ago, and is now confined to her room most of the time. Still, she is a sweet, cheerful body, although she must pass many lonely hours."

"Is she able to read? Does it tire her?" asked Isabel.

"It wearies her to hold heavy books, and she has not been provided with much which is light in weight."

"I know what we can do," said Barbara. "Oh, Isabel, you have so many magazines which you simply look over and throw aside; let us take out the best in them for Miss Wilmer. We can stitch together the pages of a story or an interesting article, and make a separate booklet of each."

"That's just like you, Barbara," said Isabel, fondly.

"Oh, don't give me the credit of the invention. I saw it suggested in a newspaper the other day."

"Uncle Henry, will you go to the house, when you return to the city, and collect all the magazines you can lay your hands on, and send them out here to me?" Isabel said.

"I will, with pleasure."

"I will go and see Caroline myself," Miss Ray said. "I've not seen her for years, but I remember her very well."

"I saw our friend Merrill on the train," Mr. Vandermeer told them. "He was on his way to visit some cousins a little farther on, but I fancy he will find his way here."

Isabel turned a rosy red. "He has some cousins

up this way. I remember he told me," Barbara remarked.

"Who are they?" Aunt Thankful asked.

"I don't know. Do you, Isabel?"

"Their name is Marvin, I believe."

Aunt Thankful nodded. "I know them. There are three girls and their widowed mother. An uncle, too, I think, lives with them. At least, that is the family I know."

"It must be the same," Isabel told her. "I have heard Mr. Merrill mention three daughters in the family."

The afternoon proved her to be right, for there appeared Mr. Merrill and his three cousins, who had driven over from a neighboring village, to call on the new arrivals at Miss Ray's house. The three Marvin girls were quite different in appearance as well as in character. Cora, the eldest, was also the prettiest, but she was quite conscious of the fact, and seemed to think that everything must come to her by right of her good looks. Marian had an intelligent face and a sympathetic voice and manner, while Grace, the youngest, seemed a thoughtless little creature, who might develop well or ill, according to her influences and environment. She was unaffectedly spontaneous, and made speeches which rather shocked Miss Ray.

They had not taken their departure when Mr. Palmer, Roger, and Mr. Karl Blumenbach arrived upon the scene. Barbara was borne off by Roger, after she had given Mr. Karl over to the second Miss Marvin, but she kept herself in sight, with watchful eye to the entertainment of the callers.

"Who are they, anyhow?" growled Roger.

"Cousins of Mr. Merrill. You remember I told you about his being with us so much in Boston."

Roger leaned back against the tree, under which they were sitting, to go through the process of "sizing them up," as he called it.

He was at an age to be rather shy of girls, but he confessed that he didn't mind "the jolly ones," and was very good friends with Isabel. "Say, that tallest one is awfully struck on herself," he said, in boyish vernacular. "I notice she has taken the best chair. She moved herself into it when Aunt Thankful got up to speak to us, and hadn't the manners to offer it to her when she came back. I don't fancy her."

"She is very pretty," put in Barbara.

"Hm-hm. So-so; but she's so deadly conscious of it that it spoils her. That next one is the backbone of the family, I'll bet. She's the one who does the marketing, and washes the dishes when the servant has her Sunday off."

Barbara laughed. "You know all about it, of course. What of Miss Grace?"

"She's all right, too," returned Roger. "I like her. She's not afraid to speak her mind. She isn't just exactly pretty, but she is full of fun, and has a nice taking little way."

"Then I'll let her try it on you. Come over and talk to her while I have a word with grandfather."

"Just wait a minute. Miss Don't-you-think-I'm-pretty has monopolized Mr. Merrill, and now she has taken Mr. Karl from her sister. It was rather a neat trick, but I'll break that up."

"Now, Roger."

"Yes, I will. I don't propose to let that sort of thing go on."

"Ride on, Sir Knight." And Roger advanced toward the porch where all the others were sitting. He established himself by Isabel, who was talking to Mr. Palmer, and began a recital of something which Mr. Karl had been telling him.

Mr. Karl's attention was gradually attracted by Roger's frequent repetition of his name, and he soon left Miss Marvin's side. "I beg your pardon, Miss Bromley," he said, "but Roger is getting that slightly mixed. It was this way. I am not over-modest, but really, when all sorts of things are attributed to me that belong to some one else, I must do the other fellow justice."

"All right, you tell it," said Roger, composedly. "I wasn't there, and of course I couldn't be expected to get the hang of it." And he turned a mischievous countenance upon Barbara. "I knew that would fetch him," he said, in an undertone, as he joined her. Then the two crossed the porch to where Miss Grace was trying to entertain Mr. Vandermeer, who smiled indulgently at her nonsense.

He looked up with an air of relief as Barbara approached, but now Miss Marvin had made a movement to go, and the party broke up, with promises from Aunt Thankful's girls to take tea with the Marvins the next week, Roger being included in the invitation, since he meant to stay for a week, previous to his starting forth with Mr. Karl on a business trip.

He was highly elated over his prospects. He had

been studying hard all winter, and the young German had managed to have the lad appointed as one of his assistants in some work he was about to undertake in the West; so Roger was really going to see life, and was beginning to feel himself self-supporting.

Isabel and Barbara turned to each other when the guests drove away. "Well?" said Barbara.

"Well?" returned Isabel, with what, Barbara thought, was rather a forlorn little smile.

"They seem rather nice girls, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes, very nice." Isabel strove to speak with enthusiasm.

"Especially the second one. I liked her the best."

"So did I." There was real warmth this time. Nevertheless, Isabel seemed very quiet and absent-minded the rest of the evening.

"We are quite piled up with engagements," said Barbara, entering Isabel's room that night. "We are to go to tea to the Marvins, and we are going to Orange to see Miss Wilmer, and grandfather has brought us tickets for a very good concert on Tuesday. Mr. Vandermeer says he will go, but I am afraid it will involve our staying in town all night. Then the Adamses and the Gardners are coming out here one day next week to do some sketching. I think we might ask Mr. Merrill to come, too, the same day. Aunt Thankful is getting quite gay, isn't she? You aren't a bit enthusiastic, Isabel, dear. What makes you so quiet? Are you homesick, or what? You were so joyous all the time we were in Boston. What has come over the spirit of your dreams?"

"I'm not homesick," replied Isabel, drawing Bar-

bara close to her. "Please love me, Barbara. Love me very much."

"I do love you dearly," returned Barbara, earnestly. "You are my very dearest, dearest friend, you know. Won't you tell me what makes you so—so pensive?"

Isabel shook her head, and after many assurances of her devotion, Barbara left her. But in the quiet of her own room, with Helen fast asleep by her side, she gave herself up to thought. Two questions troubled her. Why was Isabel so depressed? and what meant that very reproachful look upon Mr. Karl's face when he gave her his usual "Guten Nacht, und schlafen sie wohl"? She could settle neither, and went to sleep with the glory of a Sabbath morning in June to dissipate her worries of the night before.

Mr. Karl, who was an early riser, found her on the porch gathering clusters of roses with which to adorn the breakfast-table. "These remind me of my old home in Maryland," she told him. "A bush of Baltimore Belles used to grow all over one of the porches, and a dear little humming-bird used to build among them every year." She gave a little sigh.

"Does it then make you so sad?" asked Mr. Karl.

"Not exactly, but I think we must always have a little tugging at the heart when we remember our childhood's home. It isn't so much that we regret the home, as it is that memories haunt such places, and they bring a sigh."

"I think it is so. I was a very small chap when I left Germany, but I often sigh when I remember it. Those are very pretty little flowers. Will you give me one?"

"Certainly. They are pure white when they are fully open, but the buds tinged with pink are even lovelier. Here is one half-blown. Put it in your button-hole." She fastened it in his coat, and just then Mr. Vandermeer came out. Mr. Karl gave a quick little frown, but Barbara turned with a cheerful greeting.

"You are up early, for a New Yorker," she said. "What stirred your slumbers?"

"The noises," he said, smiling.

"Noises? After New York?"

"Yes; the confused rumble of city streets doesn't disturb me, but a particularly shrill-voiced rooster, and a very eloquent calf, not to mention a flock of guinea-fowls, were too much for me."

Barbara laughed. "He doesn't know how to appreciate rural music, does he, Mr. Karl? Now, all those things make me drowsy; but I like to get up early, not because I am awakened by country sounds, but because everything is so deliciously fresh and beautiful these lovely summer mornings. Look at those roses out there. If it were not for the dew, I would have some of them. They are such a glorious color."

"Do you want them? I shall be pleased to gather them," said Mr. Karl, eagerly, catching up the shears with which she had been cutting her flowers.

"Only a few," Barbara assented. "Don't get your feet wet."

He smiled and glanced down at his foot-gear. "I, who go through mud and wet, in all kinds of weather, would be a pretty fellow to stop at a trifle of dew on the grass," he answered, as he sprang down the steps.

Mr. Vandermeer watched him depart with some complacency. "He is a stirring young man, is he not?" he said, dropping into a chair.

"Yes, and a good one; a devoted son and a kind friend, and much else," she replied, her eyes following Mr. Karl's clippings of thorny stems.

"Will you drive to church with me?" Mr. Vandermeer asked, abruptly.

"Why, we will all go together, I suppose," Barbara returned, without taking her eyes from Mr. Karl's movements.

"There are—let me see—one, two, three—eight of us, you know."

"Four can go in the carriage and two in the chaise, and it is true that there will be two left out, although Roger and Mr. Karl can go on their wheels."

"Then, perhaps, I may take you in the chaise."

Barbara's mouth showed her amusement at the suggestion. "Then we might as well start now," she said, "for Dolly always is driven to the chaise. I forgot, you do not know her speed. We can easily walk faster."

"But it is dusty."

"Do you mind dust?"

"Sometimes, yes."

"You don't mind dust, nor mud, nor wet, do you, Mr. Karl?" Barbara asked, going forward to take the roses from the young man's hand. "How lovely these are!"

"I mind those things? I say, no, indeed."

"Then you can let Mr. Vandermeer have your wheel, and you and I will walk to church."

Mr. Karl's face was radiant. "I am most happy to do so," was his reply.

"I think, after all, I'll not go to church," said Mr. Vandermeer a trifle crossly. "Early rising has its advantages, no doubt, but I'm afraid I shall disgrace myself by nodding during the sermon. I am exceedingly obliged for the offer of your wheel, Mr. Blumenbach, but one doesn't escape dust by such means." And he left them to enter the house.

"There," thought Barbara, "I have wickedly prevented him from going to church. What made me so contrary? I was suddenly annoyed that he should be so—so—fastidious. Yet, he isn't at most times." She stood looking so long into the hearts of the roses that Mr. Karl at last asked her what she saw there. "A secret," she answered, smiling.

CHAPTER VII

TWO FAREWELLS

BUT it was not according to Aunt Thankful's intentions that any one visiting her should stay home from church without good reasons, and she therefore had the chaise made ready and ordered Roger to take his place in it with her, and Mr. Vandermeer was relegated to a place by Isabel, rather to his chagrin, it must be confessed. The party in the carriage passed Mr. Karl and Barbara contentedly trudging along on foot.

"It would have been much more proper for Miss Barbara to have taken my place," Mr. Vandermeer said to Isabel, with a little frown.

"Then why don't you get out and insist upon it?" returned Isabel, with a little amused smile.

"Simply because it would do no good. In her quiet way that young friend of yours has a mind of her own."

"And you may as well spare yourself a walk. I am afraid you are lazy, Uncle Henry."

"Mr. Vandermeer isn't lazy," spoke up Helen from the front seat. "Don't you remember, Miss Isabel, how he walked in Europe? He told me all about it."

"I have one friend, I see," Mr. Vandermeer said. "Thank you, Helen. I have always been abused by this niece of mine, and it is high time I was having a champion." But here a remark from Mr. Palmer

changed the current of the conversation, and they soon arrived at the church.

Mr. Karl and Barbara reached home in time to let Dolly through the gate. They both seemed a little sobered by their walk, a fact which Mr. Vandermeer noted. Yet Barbara never told any one why she was so grave the rest of the day, nor why she managed to be out of the way when Mr. Karl took his departure that afternoon.

"I hunted for you high and low," said Roger, meeting her coming up from the orchard. "Where were you?"

"Oh, you haven't discovered my favorite roosting-place yet," said Barbara, gayly. "I always sneak off there on Sunday afternoons, and give myself up to one of my dearest books."

"Well, you might have taken better note of time, and have come to say good-by to Mr. Karl. You will not see him again before we leave for the West."

"Oh, has he gone?" Barbara asked, indifferently enough, it seemed; although, to hide her flushed cheeks, she stooped to pick a daisy from the grass.

"Yes, he's gone; but he told me to tell you that he is a very persevering individual. We all know that, and I don't see why he was so particular about my telling you."

"It does seem rather an unnecessary piece of information," Barbara assented, airily. "Come, Boggie, and I'll show you my tree, but you mustn't tell any one where it is." And she led the way to a gnarled old apple-tree where a crotch provided a fine seat.

Roger swung himself up into it and smiled down at his sister. "It reminds me of home," he said.

"So it does me. You used to be so obstreperous those days. There have been so many changes since then, but I don't regret them."

"Nor I. There comes Mr. Vandermeer. Up with you, Bab, before he sees you." And he swooped Barbara up beside him. Not, however, before Mr. Vandermeer had seen the act.

"Ahoy, up there!" he cried.

Barbara peeped down between the leaves. "Ahoy yourself! You are too bad, Mr. Vandermeer; you have spoiled my fun by discovering my place of refuge."

Mr. Vandermeer looked quite crestfallen. "I seem to be putting my foot in it all the time lately," he said, apologetically, and Barbara showed signs of relenting, but Roger shook his head at her and held her fast.

"I came to say good-by," Mr. Vandermeer informed her. "I am going back to the city."

"Oh, are you? Help me down, Roger."

"Allow me."

"No, please. Climbing trees is not a graceful accomplishment. I'd rather you didn't see me. Just walk on a little way and I'll come." He obeyed at once, and, leaving Roger to sulk at having their little conference interrupted, Barbara joined Mr. Vandermeer.

"Why don't you wait till morning?" she asked. "Or if you were going, why didn't you go with Mr. Karl?"

"I think Mr. Karl had more agreeable company."

"What?"

"His own thoughts."

"They are generally a good wholesome kind, I imagine. How about yours?"

"They will be scarcely jovial on this occasion. I have suddenly come to a realizing sense that I am not as young as I thought I was."

"How is that? Have you come across a family Bible or something of the kind?"

"Not exactly. But never mind that. I find I must go back to the city."

"We shall see you on Tuesday, I suppose, at the concert," Barbara returned, in a matter-of-fact way.

"I expect to be there."

"It's hardly worth while to say good-by for so short a time. Tuesday is only the day after to-morrow. However, since you seem to have hunted me up to make your proper adieux, good-by." And she held out her hand.

He took it, saying, "Good-by; but I am not going just yet."

"Why, I thought you came out here particularly to make your farewells."

"So I did, but it is a very lovely evening, and I thought we might take a short walk before I go."

"It is even more dusty than it was this morning, and I thought you didn't like dust."

"We don't need to go by the road, do we?" he replied, imperturbably. "We can take that pleasant path across the fields."

"It is too warm, and I have walked enough for one day."

"Then let us sit down out here for a few moments. It is such a perfect evening."

"I promised Isabel that I would come back and waken her in time to dress for supper."

"She is awake. I heard her singing as I passed her door."

Barbara drew down her mouth and shook her head, with a slight frown. "You don't give me a loop-hole of escape, do you?"

"Not if I can help it. Miss Barbara, I—pardon me if I seem inquisitive, but I take the privilege of one who was your father's friend. Mr. Blumenbach, am I to congratulate him?"

"On what?"

"On his approaching marriage to a very dear little friend of mine."

"Mr. Blumenbach? Why, the dear old man is already very happily married," Barbara answered, mischievously.

"I mean the younger one, Mr. Karl."

"Oh, I don't know, I'm sure. He has never told me that he was engaged to be married. Perhaps he is. I will find out, if you are anxious to know. There, I see Isabel, and, yes, I must change my dress."

"Miss Barbara——"

"No, no, I can't answer any more questions now. I'm in a hurry. You will not be going till after tea?" She paused a short distance away and looked back.

"Not till after tea."

"Then a second series of adieux would be superfluous just now."

"Adios, señorita; since you will go."

Barbara ran up to the house thinking, "Dear me, there must be something in the weather to make these men so sentimental to-day. Oh, dear! I don't like to be grown up. The idea of Mr. Vandermeer asking me that. I'm a goose, maybe, to think anything of it. He simply takes a fatherly interest in me; I needn't act like such a scare-cat. I'm sorry he's going, but I wouldn't have him know it for the world." She paused a moment in front of the red rose-bush from which Mr. Karl had that morning gathered the flowers, and she sighed. Why did she like to tease Mr. Vandermeer? And why did that message of Mr. Karl's half annoy her? The roses did not answer, and she went on up-stairs, to descend to the porch just before tea-time to join Isabel, who was sitting there reading.

"Well, dear, how has the day gone?" asked the latter. "It seems to me I haven't seen much of you."

"Quite true, your royal highness. I couldn't help it, though. I don't know just how the day has gone. It has been lovely, so far as weather is concerned, but somehow I am not possessed of that Sabbath calm which the evening suggests. What are your feelings upon the subject?"

"I think it has been a horrid day," said Isabel, with emphasis.

Barbara regarded her contemplatively for a moment; then she laughed. "I think," she said, "that we'd better go back to school, for 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do,' and we were happy

enough all winter over such puzzling things as values and color and proportion. Let's turn our backs upon the world, Isabel dear, and go into retreat, where we shall have nothing to do but paint. June in the country, and we are restless and disturbed. Something must be radically wrong."

"I am afraid there is with me," sighed Isabel, "but with you—— Oh, Barbara, I never thought—— Is that it?"

"Is what it?"

"Tell me truthfully. Are you grieving for Mr. Karl?"

"I? No, my lady, I am not. Cross my heart."

"Then, what is it that disturbs you?"

"You tell."

"I can't. Here comes Uncle Henry. He looks serene enough. It is plain to see that the matters which upset our equilibrium have no effect upon him. I wish I were a man."

Barbara hid a smile. It seemed to her that she had observed two rather dissatisfied men that day. However, she kept her own counsel.

Mr. Vandermeer left them directly after tea, and on Tuesday, when they reached New York, Isabel found a note at her home from him, saying that he had been called away suddenly, and that it was uncertain when he would return. "I think that is mean," Isabel declared, handing the note to Barbara. "He might have waited till after to-day."

"Perhaps he couldn't," Barbara returned, weakly.

"Yes, he could. He hasn't anything to do but amuse himself. I suppose he's gone on some trip or

other with one of his club friends, to some hunting-lodge or camp, or some such place. He's always doing so."

Barbara handed her back the note without a word.

"Well, he has a right to do as he pleases," Isabel continued. "We can get along without him."

"Oh, yes, of course we can," Barbara assented. But there was not quite the enjoyment in the concert that she had expected, and although the evening with the Gardners and the Adamses offered the same entertainment that such evenings had before done, somehow something was missing.

"I suppose you see a great deal of Lawrence Merrill," Mrs. Gardner said to the girls.

"We have seen him once," Barbara returned; "but we are going to take tea with his cousins on Thursday, and we shall see him then, I suppose."

"He is with his cousins a greater part of his time nowadays," Mrs. Gardner continued; "but I believe one of them is sitting for him. He told me she was a stunning model, and he hoped his picture would be a success."

Barbara glanced quickly at Isabel before she answered, "I suppose it is the eldest Miss Marvin,—Miss Cora; she is quite handsome." Then came an interruption, and the subject was not brought up again.

The next day Miss Ray joined them to make the promised visit to Miss Wilmer. "I may be in just such a forlorn condition myself some day," said Isabel, "and I mean to do all I can for her." She

was given to a very melancholy view of things lately, Barbara discovered.

They found Miss Wilmer a very cheerful invalid, and well pleased to see them. "I have every comfort," she told them. "Since that dear boy sought me out I have wanted for nothing. Do you know, he had my favorite flowers sent to me every Saturday? And the other day came a graphophone. You cannot think what a source of amusement it is to me."

"What boy do you mean?" Aunt Thankful asked.

"Henry Vandermeer, to be sure. Although I am only his mother's step-sister, he gives me as much attention as if I were a real blood relation on both sides of the house. He is one of the salt of the earth, and, better still, he doesn't let his left hand know what his right hand does."

Isabel smiled. "Uncle Henry in the character of a saint is something new to me," she said. "He is a dear, generous fellow, although I have usually thought of him as being rather indolent and self-indulgent."

"Don't you believe it," returned Miss Wilmer. "He has never had any incentive to make him otherwise, but it is in him to be as self-sacrificing as any one. His letter this morning made my heart leap with joy."

"Why, does he write to you?" Isabel asked, in surprise.

"Regularly once a week, my dear, and such bright, newsy letters."

"And we don't even know where he is," said Isabel, turning to Barbara wonderingly.

"He has gone out to one of those flooded districts in

the Southwest, and is helping those poor creatures out there to get on their feet again," Miss Wilmer told them.

At this piece of information Isabel looked very thoughtful. "I couldn't have believed it," was her final comment.

When they had handed over their supply of neatly stitched pages of reading matter, the girls left Miss Thankful to talk over old times, and the two returned to the city.

"How true it is that we only touch at certain points," said Isabel, when they were crossing the ferry. "In all these years I have never known my Uncle Henry. I am dying to see the dear old fellow. I love him a thousand times more since I know what a truly good heart he has. I wonder if he really is interested in that Miss Avery," she added, musingly.

But Barbara said only, "See that big ocean liner coming in. When will we be on one like it coming home from Paris, do you suppose?"

"I don't know," returned Isabel. "Perhaps I shall go over next year. I'd like to."

"And leave me?"

"Maybe you could go, too."

"No; it will be a long time before I am rich enough; besides, now that Roger will be away so much, I couldn't leave grandfather and Helen. You will have to go without me."

"Not if I can help it. Wasn't that a clever idea of Uncle Henry's? I should never have thought of getting a graphophone, and it is such a good one. Some of those whizzing, droning things make my

head ache, but this one is fine. Did you hear Aunt Caroline say that Uncle Henry had sent one like it to the Children's Hospital? I wonder how he came to think of it. Poor Aunt Caroline, I don't believe she is long for this world, and I am glad her last days are made so much brighter. I must go to see her often and try to do what I can to make the hours less wearisome."

"It must be very hard to be so shut in," Barbara replied. And then the boat touched the New York side and they turned to other topics.

That night Barbara swung in the hammock, while Isabel and Mr. Merrill sat under the vines at the other end of the porch. Mr. Merrill had come over to make sure that they understood that it was the next Thursday that they were to take tea with his cousins, and although Barbara noticed a little haughtiness in Isabel's manner of receiving him, he did not seem to detect it, and was as merry as possible, while to Barbara's plea that she was tired and didn't feel like leaving her place in the hammock, she noticed that there was not much protest from Isabel. Truth to tell, Barbara was glad of a quiet moment for self-communion. "That dear boy!" she repeated the words to herself. "Why, Miss Wilmer seemed to think Isabel's uncle a very young man. Perhaps he wasn't so old, after all. Not older than Mr. Gardner, and Mr. Merrill was but five years younger. I believe I am a very silly girl," Barbara told herself, but in just what way she did not even inform that other self with whom she was sharing her secrets.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ACCIDENT

THURSDAY afternoon saw the girls preparing for their visit to the Marvins. Isabel lingered a long time over her toilet, but finally abided by Barbara's advice and chose a delicate lavender gown, exquisite in texture and beautifully made. "The most becoming thing you have," Barbara told her, "and that hat just suits it."

"You look stunning, Miss Isabel," was Roger's comment.

"And how do I look?" Barbara asked him.

"You always look best in white," Roger answered, a little dissatisfied with her buff lawn; "but that's rather pretty. You'll do, I reckon. I hope they'll have a good supper."

"You carnal-minded creature!" exclaimed Isabel. "When you are going to see ladies you should be thinking of nothing but the pleasure of their society."

"Humph!" Roger returned; "you want me to be like those middle-aged fellows in the times of the Crusades, I suppose."

"They were sometimes very young, Roger," protested Isabel.

"Who said they were not?"

"You called them middle-aged."

"Oh, you know well enough what I meant. I'm

glad I don't live in those times, though. Just think of how they used to go racketing around, getting knocked out by fellows who came swooping from nobody knows where, and eating out of trenchers and things where all sorts of jays poked their fingers. Give me modern times, I say."

"Yes, most sapient youth, so say we all of us. Which of the young ladies in particular do you intend to monopolize?" Isabel asked, teasingly.

"The jolly one," replied Roger, nothing abashed. "Don't tell her how old I am, Barbara."

"No, I'll not, unless she asks me, and then I'll tell her you have reached the ripe age of seventeen."

"You couldn't make it eighteen?"

"Not even for you, dearest. You know you don't care a fig, anyway, and, besides, would not have me risk my reputation by falsifying."

"No, I wouldn't; that's a fact. Do you know the place?"

"Mr. Merrill said a white house to the left; third house from the meeting-house."

"They are all white."

"But not all the third from the corner."

They found the place without difficulty, and were met at the gate by Mr. Merrill, who piloted them up the walk to the front porch, where the eldest Miss Marvin received them. She wore a gown of some clinging white stuff, with a bunch of yellow roses, and Barbara viewed her jealously on Isabel's account. Miss Marvin bore them off to an upper room, and told them that Marian would appear later. "She is always behindhand," she added. "I have been on the

porch with Cousin Lawrie, waiting for you, for an hour."

"Our horse is not very swift," replied Barbara, for the sake of saying something.

"Before we go down I want to show you what Cousin Lawrie is doing," continued Miss Cora. "I know you artists are always interested in one another's work." She ushered them into a large room, which showed signs of having been hastily converted into a studio. "This was mamma's room," Miss Marvin informed them; "but I just told her she'd have to give it up."

"Did Mr. Merrill consent to her doing that?" Isabel asked, in surprise.

"I didn't tell him about it. I knew he was simply dying to have me sit for him, and so I managed to get the place fixed up somehow. Now, don't tell on me."

The girls were silent, but this was not noticed, for they had now reached the canvas upon which Mr. Merrill was working. It promised well, and both Isabel and Barbara were impressed by its worth.

"I tell Cousin Lawrie that he has idealized me," Miss Marvin said. "But then, you know, an artist is so likely to do that under certain circumstances. Do you think it like me?"

"Like and unlike," returned Isabel, slowly. "It is as one with your features might be 'under certain circumstances.'" She spoke with a little curl of the lip, which only Barbara saw.

Miss Cora looked very conscious, and said, "It isn't finished, you know."

"Do you like sitting to artists?" asked Barbara.

"Sometimes, and to some persons," Miss Cora made answer. "You see Cousin Lawrie and I have known each other all our lives, and of course—well, you know, we have very good times. I am so proud of him. He has made dozens of studies of me. I will show you some of them." And she pulled forth a portfolio containing a number of quick sketches.

"They are very clever, are they not?" Barbara said, looking over Isabel's shoulder.

"Very spirited," returned Isabel. "Thank you, Miss Marvin. May we look at some of these color studies on the wall?"

"Those landscapes? I am so fond of them. Every one represents some spot around here. We have had such lovely strolls hunting up motifs."

"This vicinity offers many, I have discovered, and I suppose Mr. Merrill has observed the same thing," Isabel said.

"Who is talking about me?" a voice at the door inquired. "This is where I find you all, is it? I wanted to show you my impromptu studio which Cora was good enough to arrange for me. Nice light, isn't it? Cora said the room wasn't in use, so I was glad enough to avail myself of it. Have you been criticising my picture? I wish you would say frankly what fault you see in it."

"We are only students; we wouldn't presume to criticise," Isabel said, distantly.

"The fact of your being students ought to insure me a criticism," replied Mr. Merrill, smiling.

"You mean that they are generally too ready to

find fault because of their small amount of knowledge? Yes, I think that is generally their danger; consequently you will spare us the being placed under the category of would-be critics," Isabel said. "We are interested in your little landscapes."

"I am glad of that. Have you seen Mrs. Marvin and Marian?"

"Not yet. Come, Barbara, we will go down."

They found Roger talking to Miss Grace on the porch, where a mild-faced gentleman was sitting. Miss Cora's face took on a little annoyed expression when she saw the latter. "What made him come out?" she said in an undertone to her sister. He was presented as Mr. Adrian, and it was not till afterwards that the visitors learned that he was Mrs. Marvin's brother. Isabel sat down by him and began talking in her bright way, while Barbara was left to Miss Cora. Marian had not yet appeared, and, indeed, it was only a few minutes before tea was announced that she did come out, looking fagged and pale. She was neat in appearance, but her gown was of last year's pattern and showed signs of long and careful wear.

The house was an old one, somewhat dingy for want of paint, and needing repairs; still, everything was comfortable and the supper was dainty and well served. A neat-looking, half-grown girl waited upon the table deftly and quietly.

Roger and Grace seemed to be on very good terms, the lively girl being one of the few who possessed the power of bringing out Roger's best self. Isabel had the same influence, so he appeared very well. Old

Mr. Adrian, in his shabby coat, and Mrs. Marvin, looking careworn and anxious, had little to say, although Barbara and Isabel did their best to be entertaining.

As they passed out of the dining-room, Roger said to his sister, in a low tone, "Ask Miss Marian to sing," and Barbara took the hint. However, Marian did not appear for half an hour, then Barbara made her request: "Don't you sing, Miss Marian?"

"Yes, she does," spoke up Grace. "She has a lovely voice. Don't frown at me, Marian. You have."

"Please don't refuse," said Isabel, eagerly. "Shall we go inside to listen?"

"No, she has a guitar, and it is lovely to hear it out of doors, don't you think?" said Grace. "I'll get it for you, Marian. You are tired, I know. We are so far back from the street, Miss Bromley, that we don't mind having Marian show off where she cannot be seen, but only heard, by the people passing."

After a little persuasion Marian consented to sing, and in the soft air of a summer evening the music was really delightful, for the girl's voice was of excellent quality and she used it well.

Still, the visit was not altogether a success. Roger seemed to have enjoyed it more than any of them, and he was very talkative during the drive back.

"Miss Grace seems to have been very confidential," Isabel remarked, after Roger had related several bits of family history about the Marvins.

"She's all right," returned Roger, "and so is Miss Marian. Miss Cora isn't in it when they are around."

"So far as you are concerned, you mean? Don't you think she is pretty?" Isabel asked.

"Yes, rather, but she can't hold a candle to you," he added, bluntly.

"Another compliment from Roger!" laughed Barbara. "Isabel, you are set up."

"You see," Roger went on, "I know all about it. They aren't well off. That little girl who waited on the table they took from an orphan asylum to raise. She is the only servant they keep, and Miss Marian made all those good things we had for supper. I tell you, I'd like to have a wife that could make rolls like those. I came near forgetting where I was, and didn't know when to stop eating. I caught your eye, Barby, and then I stopped."

"And none too soon. You have such an appetite, Roger. Isabel, he ate seventeen pieces of waffle the other morning."

"Well, what if I did? I am growing."

"Very true, and no one 'begrutches' you, as old Dilly used to say. Miss Marian certainly cooked a very good supper if she made the cake and the salad and the rolls; and what did Miss Grace do?"

"Oh, she helped. She must sew like greased lightning. She made that dress her mother had on; began it yesterday and finished it to-day. Miss Marian wouldn't get a new one because her mother needed it; and that's why she didn't look so well as the others."

"The dear thing!" exclaimed the two girls.

"And who was the old gentleman with the benign face, Roger?" Barbara asked.

"Two by nine, I should say. Did you ever see such a long phiz? That's Mrs. Marvin's brother. He doesn't amount to much, I imagine. He seems to have nothing to do but sit around, but I believe he has something the matter with him,—heart disease, or something of the kind. Can't Miss Marian sing, though? She can have me."

"I thought it was Miss Grace. Are you going to bestow your youthful affections on Miss Marian? I thought you would look my way, Roger, if you gave your affections to one older than yourself," Isabel said, laughing.

Roger gave the horse a little flick with the whip and replied, sagely, "You wouldn't wait for me, you know."

Roger's gay humor had passed off by the next morning, and he was in one of his grumpy moods all day, so that there was "no living with him," Barbara said, and they left him to his own devices, for Aunt Thankful and Helen started for the city on an early train, and the girls went off to sketch.

There was a very proud and scornful look on Isabel's face when, early in the afternoon, Mr. Merrill was seen approaching on his wheel. He came up to the porch in his usual free and easy manner, and set himself down in the hammock. "Won't one of you sit for me?" he asked. "I felt the fires of genius burn when I arose this morning, and so I flew over here to find an inspiration."

"Where was Miss Cora?" Barbara asked, a trifle sarcastically.

"She was—let me see—she was trimming a hat, I

believe, when I left. But that has nothing to do with the present subject. Will you sit, Miss Barbara?"

"What will you do if I consent?"

"I will—let me consider—I will keep off the goats the next time we all go out sketching."

"That is a mean reminder of past obligations."

"So it is; then I'll propose something entirely new; I will take you out sailing."

"Oh, will you? Then I will sit for you."

"I didn't say when I would do it."

"Mean again."

"But I meant this evening."

"Oh!"

"Miss Bromley, aren't you going to take advantage of this opportunity for making a sketch? I shall try oils this time."

"Barbara will sit for me at any time," returned Isabel. "I have a book, and will not disturb you; besides, we were sketching all the morning."

He looked up a little hurt at her very icy tone, but his good-humor asserted itself, and he gave himself up to his work, singing snatches of songs and chatting gayly to Barbara. "Mr. Vandermeer ought to be here," he said. "Where is he?"

"Somewhere out West," was the reply.

"He is a good sailor. I wish we had him here to go with us. Is your brother fond of the water?"

"He is fond of any kind of sport when he is in a good-humor, but when he has a mood you might offer him the delights of a Mohammedan Paradise and he would scowl at the houris and turn his back on Mahomet."

"And to-day?"

"He, unfortunately, has a mood."

"Then we won't ask him. A little more to the left, Miss Barbara. Miss Bromley doesn't know what she is missing. I am afraid she has a mood, too."

Isabel's lips curled in quiet contempt, and she gave a little supercilious lifting of her eyebrows. "The idea of his daring to comment upon my actions," was what the expression conveyed to Barbara.

After an hour's work Mr. Merrill threw down his brush, crumpled up his sketch, and declared that he could not restrain his impatience to get out on the water. "I'll just get on my wheel and see what I can find in the way of a boat," he told them. "I will be back before long, and if you will be ready to go, we can start at once."

"Who be ready?" Barbara asked.

"All of you: Miss Bromley and your brother, if he cares to go, and yourself. I'm sorry my sketch proved so unsatisfactory; it showed I needed an inspiration that I did not have."

"Now, Isabel," said Barbara, when he was out of hearing, "did you hear? You failed to provide the inspiration, and I sat for that whole long hour all for nothing."

"I failed to provide inspiration? Very likely, indeed. He has probably had a tiff with Miss Cora, and is in a befuddled state of mind."

"What makes you say that?"

"Because. You heard what she said yesterday. I think she invited us there solely to show us that Mr.

Merrill was her special property, and that we need not try to poach upon her preserves."

"I don't believe it."

"After what she said in the studio? Besides, you did not hear what she said to me later."

"What?"

"Her words were, 'You know how it is with Cousin Lawrie and me, but of course he is not in a position to marry.'"

"Humph! rather ambiguous. Anyhow, he doesn't look at her as he does at you."

Isabel leaned forward. "What do you mean?"

"He certainly gives you the most devouring glances. I can see, especially when I am sitting for him and have nothing to do but watch his expressions."

"Purely your imagination, my dear. Miss Cora has given me proof enough of his devotion to her. We'll not agitate the subject. I am only sorry that it is not Miss Marian on whom his affections are set. I should respect him more if he had chosen a girl with a really fine character."

"It is queer how fine men so often have their heads turned by a merely pretty girl," said Barbara, thoughtfully.

"Poor beauties! One would suppose they were all worthless butterflies."

"I know one who isn't, and she's not ten feet off."

"You dear flatterer, I wasn't fishing; for you know I am not a beauty in my own estimation. I don't admire my special style."

"But I do, and so does Roger, and, I repeat it, so does Mr. Lawrence Merrill. A beautiful woman, who

is also a good one, can be an immense power, my dear, and that's what you will prove. Look! What is that coming?"

"A wagon. Some supplies from town, I suppose."

"But it is coming so slowly, and, oh, Isabel, see!"

They ran hastily down the steps, to be met by two men, who had alighted from the wagon, which had stopped a little distance away.

"I beg your pardon, ladies," said one of the men, "but does this young gentleman belong here? We saw him lying at the foot of the hill. He must have taken a header from his wheel. We found the handle-bar broken."

"A young gentleman? Here? Oh, can it be Roger?" cried Barbara. But Isabel, with white lips, whispered, "No, it is Mr. Merrill."

CHAPTER IX

A DISCLOSURE

TRUE enough, it was Lawrence Merrill who had been thrown from his wheel by the breaking of the handle-bar, and who lay stunned and bleeding on the roadside, to be picked up by the first passers-by. He was lifted tenderly into the house, and Roger was despatched for a doctor. Aunt Thankful's angular maid, Zerviah, came sternly forward at sound of the commotion. What were those foolish chits of girls up to, in Miss Ray's absence? she wondered. But at sight of the still, white face, dappled with blood, she was efficiency itself, and took matters into her own hands.

"Carry him up-stairs, into the last room on the right; that is the quietest," she said. "I don't believe he is so much hurt if his in'ards is all right, and I guess they are. Just you git away, Miss Barbary, I'll bring him round." And, indeed, in a few moments her patient opened his eyes and looked blankly at his nurse. "He's not in his right mind yet," continued Zerviah. "He must have fell on his head, and he's sort of off like. Don't be skeered; he's far from bein' a corpse."

"Is he much hurt?" Isabel asked, anxiously.

"No, child, I d'know as he is; but then I d'know as he ain't. It'll take a doctor to tell if all his bones is sound."

They were still ministering to him when the doctor

arrived and pronounced a broken collar-bone the worst of his injuries, unless the blow which he had received upon the head should develop a more serious condition. "He must be carefully watched," he told them, after having set the bone, "and if he seems much worse, send for me. He should not be moved for some time. I will call again in the morning. He will be likely to have a high fever to-night. Shall you need a nurse?"

Zerviah shook her head. "I'm used to nursin'," she said. "I reckon I can judge about him, and, at any rate, Miss Thankful will be back on the six-o'clock train, and she's as good as any doctor. She won't stand any of these here hired nurses potterin' around her house, givin' orders."

"I'll trust him to Miss Ray," said the doctor, smiling. "I don't apprehend any complications, but if I am needed don't hesitate to send." And with that he took his leave.

It was about an hour later that a telegram arrived from Miss Thankful. She was going to remain in New York overnight. Some business affairs required her presence the first thing in the morning, and she might be detained till some time in the afternoon. The girls looked at each other in consternation. Should they take the responsibility of the night-watch?

"Ought we to send for his relatives, Barbara?" Isabel questioned.

An answering doubt showed itself in Barbara's eyes. "I don't believe I could stand that girl," she said in a whisper, "and she would be sure to come. With Roger and Zerviah we ought to be able to get along.

Aunt Thankful will be back to-morrow, and I think it would be wiser to leave matters as they are till she comes. Do we need any more help, Zerviah?"

"I don't; maybe you do," was the grim response. "If I can't set up with a sick man for one night, I am a poor stick. I've nursed day and night for six weeks on a stretch, but there's Thomas Lakin and his wife over in the tenant house, if you ain't sure about me."

"We are sure, but we don't want you to be all tired out."

"If Tessy can manage to get your wittles, I can manage the settin' up."

"We can help Tessy, and Roger can be on hand. You have no idea how good and gentle a nurse he can be. I found that out when grandfather was ill. Suppose we two sit up till midnight, and then you take the last half of the night. How will that do?"

Zerviah contemplatively grasped her chin with her long, bony fingers. "That'll do," she replied, after a moment's thought. "I will lay down in the next room, and you can call me if you ain't sure about anything." And so they decided to arrange it.

Leaving Zerviah to give present attention to the patient, the two girls went down-stairs to help the housemaid to prepare supper, which Roger alone seemed to enjoy. "Miss Isabel, you are as white as a ghost," he said. "You were scared stiff, I believe; and I tell you, when I saw them lifting Mr. Merrill out of that wagon I had a queer feeling myself; but I'm all right now. Give her something, Barbara. If she cannot eat anything, she can at least drink some

milk." And pouring out a glassful, he carried it to her himself. "Every drop," he insisted.

"Boggie, you are a comfort," said Isabel, as she handed him the empty tumbler. "You really have a very sustaining influence. I feel less nervous already."

It was a strange sensation for the two girls: to be watching by the bedside of this acquaintance, who suddenly had acquired such importance in the household, and they listened gravely to Zerviah's directions. "He's light-headed, and he'll be likely to wander," she said as she left them. "Folks says queer things when they ain't all there, but I don't believe he'll get very wild, for that stuff the doctor left seems to quiet him. 'Every hour,' the bottle says. Now I'll go and sleep for a spell, but you be sure to call me when it's time."

It was then nine o'clock, and the summer twilight had ended. Sweet odors came in through the open windows, and there was a soft sound of whispering leaves.

"Isn't it strange that he does not see nor hear the voices of the night?" said Barbara, taking one of Isabel's cold hands in hers. "Poor Isabel, this is a new experience for you. I don't believe you would like to be a trained nurse."

She answered by a shake of the head. Words did not come easily just now.

The man on the bed stirred and muttered uneasily. Barbara leaned over him and moved the cloths upon his head. "This rubber bag of ice needs changing," she said. "Will you fill it, Isabel, or shall I? Per-

haps I'd better do it. You sit still." She stepped out upon the porch where the ice was kept, and as she disappeared, a little choking sob came from Isabel, and she slipped her cool fingers into the man's hot hand, and then, for a brief moment, laid her cheek against it, but almost immediately she withdrew her hand, pulled herself up stiffly, compressed her lips, and sat staring across the room where a flickering night-lamp burned. Suppose this vigil were hers to keep alone, and he lying there were—— No, no. She arose to her feet. Would Barbara never come? What was he saying? She leaned over the bed, eager to catch some word of the mutterings; but nothing reached her ears except a confused jumble of words. Only once he called out, "Hey, there!" and again it seemed as if he said, "A little more to the left, please."

Presently Barbara came in with the bag of ice, which she adjusted, and then she resumed her place by the bed. "Has he been quiet?" she asked.

"Yes, quite so. He murmurs a little once in a while. Oh, Barbara!" She gave a little whimper like that of a hurt child, but recovered herself at once. "I haven't seen much illness, you know," she said, "and it unnerves me. I'd be a poor watcher without you. There, it strikes ten; he must have his medicine."

The first watch over, Zerviah promptly appeared, and the girls went to their rooms, but with Isabel it was not to sleep. Every movement in the room across the hall seemed to strike her listening ears with unusual force, and it was only when the first breeze of dawn

stole in through her window that she sank into a troubled slumber.

The doctor called while they were at breakfast, and pronounced the patient doing well. "But I would keep him as quiet as possible, and don't allow any visitors," was his parting charge.

"We shall have to send the Marvins word, I suppose," said Barbara, when the doctor had departed.

"I'll go," Roger promptly offered.

Barbara laughed. "Can we spare him, Isabel? We shall have to relieve Zerviah now, and—— On second thought, yes, Roger, you'd best go. Don't make the matter too serious, and say—— What shall he say?"

"I'll make it all right. I'll say that Mr. Merrill tumbled from his wheel, but that he is getting along all right, and they needn't bother about him. Will that do?"

"Yes, but they'll be sure to ask particulars."

"Then I'll say that he bumped his head and is a little out of sorts."

"I'll write a note to Mrs. Marvin," Barbara concluded, after some thought; "that will be best."

So, Roger was despatched with the note, and before he returned Aunt Thankful made her appearance. News that a sick man was under her roof did not in the least disturb her. In fact, she was in her element, and assumed her position of head nurse as promptly as possible. "I wouldn't have stayed a minute, if I had known, business or no business," she said. "You girls look all fagged out. Tell me all about it, and then go lie down. Zerviah and I can put this through. I'll send for Nancy Mann; she knows just what to do

in the kitchen, and everything will go on without a hitch. Tessy could never get along without an older head. Where's Roger?"

"Gone to tell the Marvins."

"Well, I hope they won't all come streaking over here. I'll turn every one of 'em out neck and heels. It's my house, and I'll have nobody in it that I don't want, relations or no relations. Mustn't see company? Of course he mustn't; I know that. Mrs. Marvin won't want to nurse him. I can answer for her well enough; she will be glad to leave that to us. She isn't able to do it, in the first place, and in the second, she can't. As for those girls, well, I'll not have them dangling around." And energetically tying on an ample white apron, Aunt Thankful took her way to the sick-room.

For a week the door was barred against all intruders. Neither Barbara nor Isabel were allowed to poke their noses inside the room. True to their expectations, Miss Cora made her appearance, and promptly tried to establish herself in the house. "It is my right," she said, plaintively, and so insisted upon taking her place by her cousin's side that Aunt Thankful was sent for to settle the matter. She viewed Miss Cora with a piercing eye. "Have you had large experience in nursing?" she asked.

"No, but I could do it, I am sure, and I ought to."

"Why?"

"Because he is my cousin, and—and—because——"

"You are a silly, sentimental goose. There is no 'ought' in the matter. You don't know what you're talking about. I've my hands full now, and I don't



Over them, a grim warden, stood Aunt Thankful

want any more in the house for my servants to wait on. I wouldn't trust you to nurse a sick dog, much less a grown man. No, Miss Cora, go 'long home, and trim up your hats and embroider stoles; that's the kind of work you're best suited to. If your mother insists upon coming, that is another thing; but she is not needed, and there is no use in her bothering herself about it. You will not get so much as the point of your shoe inside that sick-room, unless by the doctor's orders." And Miss Cora, between disappointment and indignation, took her departure.

But it was not long before all sorts of offerings came from the Marvins,—fruit, flowers, delicate dishes. "He can't eat 'em," said Aunt Thankful. And she turned the dainties over to Roger and Helen, placed the fruit on the table, and the flowers in the hall. "He is in no state to be bothered about such things," she declared, "and it's too bad the Marvins waste their money on them. Although they come in Miss Cora's name, she hasn't a thing to do with them, and it would be false pretence to say so. I'll not be party to deceit, so there!"

At length came the information that Mr. Merrill was going to sit up, and if Isabel and Barbara wanted to peep at him for five minutes they might do so. But over them, a grim warden, stood Aunt Thankful, her eye on the clock, and the short interview was not a very satisfactory one.

Isabel's lips quivered as she came from the room. "He looks so thin and pale," she said.

"That is nothing," Barbara returned. "He is getting along beautifully. He will be down-stairs in a

few days." And so he was; by that time taking matters in his own hands and insisting upon leaving his room.

"I'll not be cooped up any longer, Miss Ray," he said. "With this glorious summer passing, how can you have the heart to keep me within four walls? I'll make love to Zerviah, and get her to let me down from the window, if you refuse to let me out in a better way."

The idea of his making love to Zerviah tickled Aunt Thankful's sense of humor, and she consented to his going down for a short time.

"I know just why you are so hard on me; you hate to give me up," said the young man, saucily. "Dear Miss Thankful, you have been so good to me," he added, more seriously. "I wonder what I can ever do to show you how grateful I am." He held out a thin hand.

"Tut, tut," said Aunt Thankful; "I'd have done the same for any one who came to grief at my very door. Don't waste your gratitude, my young man. Here, now, go slowly. Mind those steps." And she piloted him carefully down-stairs to where Barbara and Isabel stood to welcome him.

"This is something like," he declared, when he was established in a comfortable chair on the porch. "By the way, Miss Barbara, I am reminded that I promised to take you sailing the last time I remember being out here. I have not yet offered my apologies for breaking my engagement."

"The breaking that you did was ample excuse," she

replied, merrily. "However, we will have that sail yet. Isabel——" But Isabel had left them.

"I didn't suppose that Miss Bromley would still be here," said Mr. Merrill. "I am glad of having the opportunity of thanking you both for all you did for me. Zerviah has told me about it."

"It was very little that we did, but that little we were glad to do. Yes, Isabel has stayed longer than she at first intended. Her parents remained longer on their trip than they expected, but she has decided to go to-morrow to New York, and from there will go to Mackinaw to join Mr. and Mrs. Bromley."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes; I shall miss her so much that I do not like to think about it. Mr. Merrill, I promised your cousin, Miss Cora Marvin, that I would ask when you would like her to come over to see you. She has been very attentive, and has come, or sent, to inquire after you nearly every day."

"They are all very kind."

"Yes; for some time they sent you all sorts of dainties, which Aunt Thankful would not allow you to have."

"Yes, so she told me. Marian is a famous little cook, as I can well attest."

"But it was Miss Cora who sent them."

"Yes; so I suppose, but Marian did the preparing, I well know."

"Shall I send word to Miss Cora that you are ready to see her?"

"I see no reason for it."

Barbara looked up quickly. "Why, are you sure?"

She stopped a trifle confused. "I promised, you see."

"She will be over here, no doubt, some day soon, and I can see her without your taking the trouble to send word."

"It will be no trouble."

"But there is no need. I'm not specially anxious to see Cora. I'm not ready to resume my work yet." He smiled a little wistfully.

Barbara had no reply to make.

"What makes you so positive that I am anxious to see Cora?" he asked, after a pause. "I'd really like to know, Miss Barbara. Your manner implies something unexpressed. You are too honest, you see, to hide anything."

Barbara looked confused. "We thought—I thought—Miss Cora implied that——"

"We were sentimentally interested in one another? It's a little way she has. You mustn't mind it. I don't. She makes a stunning model, and I am very glad to find that sitting for me is not disagreeable to her; but she knows perfectly well, and always has known, that my feeling for her is that of one cousin for another. That may seem a very blunt way of putting it, but to be considered the object of her special devotion would rather amuse me, if, in this instance, it didn't annoy me. Last year she set her seal upon a young man who boarded next door, so I am informed, and when I arrived this summer she had in tow the new assistant of the church which the family attend, and she was spending hours over altar-cloths and such things. So, you see, I am not the only one

who has caught her fleeting fancy. The latest comer is generally the favorite. Tell me, Miss Barbara, does Miss Bromley think as you do?"

"Yes, of course."

"I might have known it," he murmured to himself. Then he leaned his head wearily on his hand.

"I am afraid this coming down-stairs has been too much excitement for you," said Barbara, solicitously; "you are tired."

"No, I'm not tired of anything but of being so beastly poor," he answered, savagely.

CHAPTER X

FOR OLD LOVE'S SAKE

ISABEL did take her departure the next day, but there was a beautiful light in her eyes as she bade Barbara good-by. The latter had repeated to her the conversation with Mr. Merrill, and it seemed to Isabel as if there were a new glory in the summer. "And to think that I must go while you can stay here," she said to her friend.

"I will take your place," returned Barbara, laughing. "I'm sure I'd much rather go to Mackinaw than stay here."

"I cannot understand that," Isabel responded, shaking her head.

"'June were twice June could I breathe it with thee,'" Barbara quoted. "Never mind, dear, it will soon be autumn again, and we shall all be back again in New York."

Isabel paused in the act of putting something in her trunk, and gazed thoughtfully out of the window. Then she said, with a sigh, "I'm afraid there are breakers ahead, Barbara. But I'll not borrow trouble," she added.

The summer fled quickly and quietly. Mr. Merrill soon left Miss Ray's house, but he still occupied a warm place in her heart, and the good lady hinted to Barbara that she would not frown upon an attachment between her niece and her late patient. "You children

will get what I have," she told her, "and Mr. Merrill says that this would be an ideal home for an artist."

"You dear auntie," Barbara answered. "I hope I may be old and gray before you give up your earthly home, and as for Mr. Merrill, well, I think his affections are placed elsewhere."

"And very foolishly. Isabel's parents would never consent to her marrying a poor artist, and the poor artist has too much pride and too much good sense to marry a wife until he can support her in comfort. So, put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Aunt Thankful," said Barbara, her eyes full of mirth, "I believe you'd stand by and be an aider and abettor in stealing Isabel's true love from her."

Aunt Thankful looked quite abashed for a moment. That view of the case had not presented itself to her, but she spoke up spiritedly, "At all events, I don't want you to marry that young Blumenbach." A vivid blush came to Barbara's cheeks as Aunt Thankful eyed her narrowly. "I believe you mean to," she continued.

With a little dignified air, Barbara got up and walked away. "I have no announcements to make," she said, and a few days after she returned to New York, for it was in September that the conversation took place.

Isabel wrote that she was counting the days till she should return. The Gardners wrote from the coast of Maine that it was getting too cold for them, and Mr. Adams had already returned and was making preparations for his school work. But before Isabel took her place in the class came the news to Barbara

that Mr. Bromley's finances had been severely affected by a failure in Wall Street.

It was Miss Thankful who brought the news. She appeared one morning while Barbara was at breakfast. "Aunt Thankful is here and wants to see you at once," announced Helen. "Dolly must have been harnessed up last night for her to have reached town so soon."

"You go to her, daughter," Mr. Palmer said. "I will come in a moment."

"It is Barbara she wants specially to see; she said so," Helen informed them. And Barbara at once arose to go to her aunt.

"Well, well," said Miss Ray; "I had my breakfast two hours ago. Eight o'clock, and you have not finished yours."

"But I have."

"Well, never mind. See here, Barbara, Lewis Bromley has gone all to pieces."

"What! Isabel's father?"

"Yes; I heard it last night." She sat for a moment lost in thought, then she said, "I am not given to interference, but I think in this instance that I shall act upon my impulse. You remember Lawrence Merrill?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"Of course. Well, the lad is a good lad, and he is an honorable one, too. He is fond of Isabel, but I told him that it was suicidal for a young artist to saddle himself with the heavy responsibility of marriage, even supposing that Isabel were willing to marry him. I told him that it would be a wrong to the girl

no less than to himself to marry before he was sure of a good living, and so he has not been near her, nor written to her. I saw him last night. In fact, I have seen him nearly every day of late, and I have learned——” There was a little twitching of the usually firm mouth. “I have learned that Anthony Baird is his great-uncle.”

“Anthony Baird? and who——”

“Never mind; I forget sometimes. You couldn’t know, of course. I knew him when we were young. Forty years ago, and I have not seen him since. Forty years, and he was just the age of Lawrence then. To-day I am going to see him, and I want you to go with me. He hasn’t been fair to that boy. The lad has talent, and has a right to order his life. Anthony should not have brought him up in luxury and then have turned him off, and I mean to tell him so. The boy is better worth his uncle’s consideration than any one else belonging to him, if you except Marian Marvin, and I won’t have all that money going to the Marvins, as it surely will.” She was talking half to herself, Barbara saw, and she seemed so nervous and excited that the girl wondered, although, as she went on, the truth began to dawn on her.

“You will go with me, Barbara?”

“Now?”

“Yes; go get your hat. I wish I could say, Anthony, it is my niece and your nephew who need us; but there, never mind, go along.”

Barbara went up-stairs full of curiosity. Aunt Thankful was greatly stirred, the girl could see that; but when she rejoined the good woman, she did not

refer to what had just been said, but only told Barbara that she had come in a cab, and would go on her errand in the same. She gave the driver an address, and they were taken uptown."

"Mr. Baird? Yes, madam, he is at home, but confined to his room at present," they were told by the man who opened the door to them.

"Ask him if he will see Mistress Thankful Ray," said Aunt Thankful, with dignity.

The man disappeared, but in a moment returned with the message that Mr. Baird would be pleased to see Miss Ray, if she would pardon his receiving her upstairs in his sitting-room. Aunt Thankful gave a quick glance at Barbara, then bade her follow her, and they were ushered up-stairs to where, ensconced in a big chair, was a rather portly, bald, old gentleman.

Miss Ray did not stand upon ceremony. "Well, Anthony," she said, in a matter-of-fact tone, "you didn't expect to see me this morning, I know."

Mr. Baird turned his head quickly and took in the neat little figure, quaintly but richly dressed. "Thankful Ray," he said. "After all these years?"

"Thankful Ray it is and no one else; and this is my niece, Barbara Palmer."

"Please sit down, ladies. You will pardon an invalid for not rising."

"I suppose it is gout that has laid you up," Aunt Thankful remarked.

"You were always good at guessing. It is just that."

"You haven't a notion why I have come, I'll venture to say."

"No; if my recollection serves me, you vowed the last time we met that you would never see my face again."

"Well, it isn't quite the same face," returned Aunt Thankful, with a humorous twinkle. "I know mine isn't. However, that is neither here nor there. I came to see if you had made your will."

Mr. Baird stared, for a moment quite startled out of all politeness.

"Yes, that is just why I came." Aunt Thankful emphasized each word with a tap on the floor with her umbrella.

"Yes, I have made my will," said Mr. Baird, slowly.

"And cut off Lawrence Merrill without a penny, I dare say. It would be like your dogged obstinacy."

"Thankful!" He flushed a little under his pallor.

"Oh, yes; I am not afraid to say it any more than I ever was. Were you or were you not obstinate forty years ago?"

"Perhaps I was. If I had not been——"

Aunt Thankful raised a protesting hand. "We will not follow up the subject. I think I have been full of gratitude more than once to you since then. I am a very contented woman, and once or twice have felt like sending you a note expressing my thanks."

"For what?"

"For your obstinacy."

Mr. Baird gave a little chuckle. "You haven't changed one whit; not one whit. Come over here by the window, Thankful, and let me look at you."

"No, I will not. I don't bear inspection. What I want to know is about that will. Have you left anything to the boy you reared delicately, and with whom you quarrelled because he wanted to be happy in his own way and couldn't be in yours?"

"You know him?"

"Yes; he is a good lad." And she proceeded to give an account of her acquaintance with him, Mr. Baird listening attentively. At the close of the recital, Aunt Thankful said, a sombre fire in her eyes, "I have never asked a favor of you, Anthony Baird, but I think you owe it to me to do the lad justice, and I make my appeal for him as I would for a son of my own. To whom do you owe this wealth?"

"To my wife."

"And to whom are you indebted for her?"

"To you, Thankful, to you."

"Then——"

"You shall have your way. You say that Lawrence wants to marry. Is this the young lady of his choice?" He turned to Barbara. "Come here, my dear."

"No, she is not," Miss Ray replied. "I wish she were. It is Isabel Bromley."

Mr. Baird started. "Not Lewis Bromley's daughter?"

"Yes. Now do you see why I have come? I follow the reports of the money market pretty closely, and I know——" She glanced at Barbara. "Mr. Bromley has been a heavy loser," she said, quietly.

The man nodded, but said no word.

"And yesterday's tidings brought you news of an increase in your gains."

"Thankful, what would you imply?"

"I would imply nothing. I simply make the statement that if you desire justice, as I believe in your heart you do, you will do something for Lawrence Merrill."

"I will. I promise you. Send him to me."

"To-day?"

"As soon as you will."

"We are not likely to meet again, Anthony," said Aunt Thankful, rising. "Thank you, and God bless you." There was a little tender inflection in her voice, and she went toward him, holding out her hand.

He took it and held it closely for a moment. "Good-by, and God bless you, Thankful," he said. "You will surely come to my boy's wedding?"

"Perhaps," she replied, smiling. "Come, Barbara, we must go and find Isabel. I want to take you both home with me."

They went down through the quiet house, leaving the old man sitting in the sunshine. Aunt Thankful first proceeded to a telegraph office, from which she sent a despatch. Then they drove out Fifth Avenue and stopped at Isabel's door. "I'll wait here," said Aunt Thankful; "you go in and tell Isabel to meet us at the four-o'clock train this afternoon. Don't tell her where we've been."

There was a wistful look on Isabel's face as she met Barbara. "I knew you would come, dear," she said.

"I only just heard."

"Of course. Every one knew before we did. I don't think it is so terrible, but poor mamma takes it

dreadfully to heart, although the state of affairs isn't so bad as we at first thought. Dear Uncle Henry has thrown himself in the breach, and while he and papa will be financially crippled for a time, they hope eventually to save a tidy sum, but just now we must consider the greater part of papa's fortune gone. I don't care much, and I think that is a great comfort to papa."

"Could you leave home for a little visit to Aunt Thankful?" And Barbara delivered Miss Ray's message.

Isabel considered it. "Yes, I think I could go. Papa and Uncle Henry will be busy at the office till very late, and mamma has my Aunt Gertrude with her. I should like so much to go with you."

"It will do you good to get away from all the vexing questions."

"I will see what mamma says." She returned with the word that her mother had urged her going, and that she would be at the station at the hour mentioned. Then Barbara left her, and was glad when her aunt proposed her going directly home, for her thoughts were in a whirl, and she wanted a quiet moment to herself.

First, there were Aunt Thankful and Mr. Baird. There had evidently been a romance in that direction, and he had married a rich wife who had died some years ago. Barbara gathered that much. Perhaps Aunt Thankful would tell her more about it some of these days. Then Lawrence and Isabel. How strange that Aunt Thankful should be the one to make the way easy for them! Dear Isabel! Barbara thrilled

at the thought that happiness was in store for her at the very moment when trouble had come to her home. And last, Mr. Vandermeer. He had sacrificed himself for another. He was in the city. It had been many weeks since Barbara had seen him. She went to her desk and took from it a little sketch which Isabel had made in pencil upon the back of an envelope. It represented Barbara and Mr. Vandermeer looking over a book together, and was labelled, "A souvenir of the Boston Library."

"It looks like him," said Barbara, half aloud. "How tiny Isabel has made me look! I wonder if there is that difference in our height, and I wonder, oh, I wonder about so many things. Suppose I should fall in love; I, who always insist that I will not. No, I will not. I don't want to, I don't want to." She thrust the little sketch back into her desk, and began to make her preparations for going to Miss Ray's house.

It was a mellow autumn day, and that night was a bit frosty, so that Aunt Thankful had a fire built upon the hearth. She seemed in a very subdued mood, and had surprised Isabel by meeting her with a kiss and a loving embrace as she came down to tea. "They say that troubles never come singly," she said; "but, my child, that other saying, 'every cloud has a silver lining,' is much truer. I hope this will prove to be a happy visit for you."

Isabel had not mentioned Lawrence Merrill, but Barbara knew, by the way she lingered at the open door of the room in which he had been ill, that she had not forgotten; but neither was quite prepared

for the surprise which Aunt Thankful had in store for them. Not long after they had established themselves before the open fire in the library, the heavy knocker on the front door fell with two or three sharp raps, and Mr. Merrill walked in. He went first to Miss Thankful and gripped her hand hard, and then he turned to Isabel, but theirs was an embarrassed greeting. A little after Aunt Thankful declared that she was in a mood for some music. Would Barbara sing some old, old, songs for her? And from a corner in the drawing-room she unearthed some old music-books, then sat herself down to the tinkling piano and played the accompaniments, while Barbara's young voice rose and fell in the old-time melodies: "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," "Joys that we've tasted," and "Long, long ago."

Aunt Thankful's own bright eyes were dimmed as Barbara sang, but to the two sitting before the fire the songs spoke of a joy just begun, while only the echo sounded in the ears of the strong, brave woman, who, for love's sake, had sacrificed her girlhood's dream.

CHAPTER XI

IN A BLIZZARD

THEREFORE it was that Aunt Thankful's prophecy came true, for Isabel returned home wrapped in the light which had descended from the cloud's silver lining. "Isn't it strange that I did not know?" she said to Barbara. "It was all on account of money, you know. Lawrence wouldn't tell me because he felt that it would be wrong, and now his uncle has told him he will give him a check for twenty thousand dollars the day we are married. Isn't it good of him? But even without that I think we could have managed, for Lawrence has better prospects all the time. He has a lot of illustrating to do, and one or two portraits to paint, and so,—oh, Barbara dear, did you ever think I would be such a goose? I, who meant to live for art."

"You will still be doing that. I hope you will be very, very happy, Isabel, and be an inspiration and a help."

"I hope I shall be, but I do not expect my pathway will be all roses; one can never look for that in this world. And married life is full of pitfalls, I well know; at least, it is not a life without heavy responsibilities and sacrifices."

"Yes, it is quite true; but if there is love and respect on both sides, it is probably a happier life than a single one. I suppose a purely selfish person could

never be happily married, because there must be some giving up."

"And I doubt if a very independent one could be content; your Aunt Thankful, for instance."

"Dear Aunt Thankful," Barbara said, thoughtfully. She would guard Aunt Thankful's secret, as she had been requested to do. Isabel should never know to whom she owed her happiness.

"I shall tell May Gardner at once, and Lawrence is going to see papa. I know he will consent when he knows about Mr. Baird, but I shall have to request Uncle Henry's good offices in winning mamma over. She has set her heart on my making a great match, and she thinks artists are not much better than loafers. If she could know how Lawrence has made his way alone, and how much pluck he has, she might feel different."

They were on their way to the city, having left Aunt Thankful peacefully content at the result of her efforts. "But don't you marry that Karl Blumenbach," she whispered to Barbara.

"Whom shall I marry, then?" Barbara asked, smiling.

"You needn't marry any one. You will be full as well off not to. I am sure I am, and better off than most."

"You need have no fears for me," Barbara returned. "I will consult you, Aunt Thankful, when I think myself in danger." And so she went back to the city to go to work with such good result that one of her studies was hung at the next exhibition.

The way was made smooth for Isabel's marriage in

the spring. Mrs. Bromley had given her consent when Isabel suggested that her leaving home would be sufficient excuse for the breaking up of the Bromley's expensive establishment, and that she thought a great show wedding would be in very poor taste. "So, we'll just be quietly married at Easter, and will go abroad, and you, mamma, can come over with papa in the summer, perhaps. Then, when you come back you can take an apartment or board at one of the up-town hotels, and all will be much better than if you tried to keep on here with insufficient means." And Mrs. Bromley was persuaded.

The announcement of Isabel's engagement created quite an excitement among the girls at the art school. "I knew it," said Madge Delorme. "I could tell that day, last spring, that they were dreadfully smitten. I never saw Isabel take the trouble to make herself quite so fascinating to any other man."

"And how about you, Miss Barbara?" asked Elsie Jordan. "I have heard rumors."

"Rumors about me? I hope they were in connection with my exhibition picture. Do tell me that some one intends to buy it."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, but I can tell you that certain persons have marked the attentions of a very blond young man. What has become of him?"

"I suppose you mean the younger Mr. Blumenbach. He is out West, and my brother is with him. He is the son of the dear German people with whom we make our home, and he could not well help being seen with me sometimes, since we live in the same house and attend the same church." Barbara spoke in a most

matter-of-fact way, and Elsie was satisfied. Mr. Karl had written quite frequently at first; pleasant newsy letters full of satisfactory accounts of Roger; and Barbara was too grateful for his interest in the boy not to answer in kind, so that for a time the correspondence had been quite a lively one, although of late it had dropped off in some degree. Barbara continually told herself, "I don't want to marry any one. If I mean to be an artist I must give myself up heart and mind to my work, else I shall not succeed." But at the very next moment her thoughts were liable to wander off to her summer's pleasures and she would give a little sigh.

During all the fall and up to midwinter she had not once seen Mr. Vandermeer. He was very busy, Isabel told her, and was living at a down-town hotel. "He has gone into business with a vengeance. Papa says he has so much determination and perspicuity, and that he is a perfect revelation to him." This was at Christmas, when Barbara showed Isabel the card which came with a box of long-stemmed roses, deep red and full of sweetness. "It was very kind of him to send them when he is so busy," was all the remark Barbara made to her friend, and Isabel made reply, "It is like Uncle Henry; he is so thoughtful about such things."

It was one winter day that Barbara reached home in a blinding snow-storm. It had been threatening when she started out in the morning, and by noon was snowing heavily, while later the wind had arisen and the storm was fast assuming the character of a

blizzard. "Where is grandfather?" Barbara asked Helen when she reached home.

"He went over to Mr. Eaton's to see about some piece of music. He said he would be back by six."

"He went in all this storm? He shouldn't have done such a thing; and, Helen, he didn't wear his heavy muffler, nor his thickest gloves. Oh, dear! I am afraid he will take cold. You are sure he will be there till nearly six?"

"He said so."

"Then I shall go and take this to him. He must not go without having his throat well wrapped up."

"It wasn't so bad when he started; it seemed just like a moderate storm. He was going somewhere else first. I don't think you ought to go out again, Barby."

"I will wrap up warm, and I will bring him back with me, for he isn't as sure-footed as he used to be." And she started forth, facing the snow with determination.

Her walk was across town, for an aforetime dignified neighborhood on Second Avenue was her destination. The wind had increased in force, and drove the snow in whirling, cutting particles against the girl's face. "I will go on till a car overtakes me," she told herself. But it seemed that the heavy snow had stopped street-car traffic, for no car came in sight, and she struggled on, each moment finding it more difficult to make her way. Yet her thoughts were busy. The prospect of Isabel's approaching marriage brought up the subject of her own future. Mr. Adams had told her that morning that a position in the South was open for her if she would like to teach in a girl's

school. At first her impulse was to decline. "I can't leave grandfather," she said, "and Helen needs me, too. Perhaps I am not wise to say no," she had added, after a moment's reflection.

"Take a little time to consider," Mr. Adams had said. "You will not be needed till fall, and as I can hand in the name of some one else by Easter, you have time enough to decide." And so the matter was left.

"I should dearly like to be independent, and perhaps it would be doing grandfather a greater kindness than if I stayed here to be a burden upon him. I could, perhaps, have Helen with me. Oh, dear! this is getting worse and worse." She paused nearly breathless from her battling with the storm, but bent again to the gale, and pushed on. Her progress was slow, and she began to fear that she would not reach her grandfather before he should have started for home. "If he will only get absorbed in some music with Mr. Eaton, it will be all right," she told herself, as she walked on, panting.

She was not very familiar with the neighborhood, and paused on a corner to get her bearings, but the whirling snow blinded her, and she stood uncertain of the right direction. "But I can't stand still," she decided, and again she trudged on. It was growing colder and colder; the wind howled around corners and swirled the snow into drifts. Barbara thrust her hands into her grandfather's gloves and tied his muffler around her ears, but it seemed as if the cold penetrated to her very marrow, and she could only walk a few steps at a time without stopping to rest. There were scarcely any persons to be seen in this quiet



Stooping over the prostrate form, he raised her in his arms

vicinity, and darkness was fast descending, although the street lamps twinkled faintly through a blurred atmosphere. Barbara had now but one thought: to concentrate her energies upon reaching some place of shelter. Once she paused uncertainly before a shop, determining to go in. "But I must find grandfather. I must—I must," she said to herself. A few steps farther, and strength failed her; she sank down in the snow, raising a feeble cry of "Help! Help!"

Just then through the scurrying snow-flakes a man could be seen approaching. The girl's cry had reached his ears, and he stooped over the prostrate figure, raising her in his arms. Then with a sharp exclamation he strode through the snow-drifts, pausing only for a moment as if to come to some determination. He made his way toward a building not more than a block away, and before many minutes Barbara opened her eyes in a large room, whose drawing-tables and boards gave evidence of its being the office of an architect. A plain-looking woman was rubbing her cold hands, and bending over her, with anxious face, was Mr. Vandermeer. At sight of him Barbara began to cry weakly.

"The pore dear, she's came to," said the woman. "I'll just get her a warm sup of something, Mr. Vandermeer, sorr, an' she'll be all right, I think."

"Thank you, Mrs. Dougherty. I think I would do that," said Mr. Vandermeer. And then he gathered Barbara's little cold hands into his.

"I am so glad to see you," said Barbara.

"Are you, dear? And you cannot know how glad I am that I found you."

"Please tell me how it happened."

"I went to your house, and was told that you had gone out to find your grandfather. Why did you face such a storm, dear child?"

"I was afraid grandfather would get cold. Do you suppose he is out in this storm?"

"No; I think he has better judgment than to brave a blizzard, which, though not as bad as that of several years ago, is bad enough."

"And you went to our house? You have not been there in a long while." Barbara sat up, regarding him wistfully.

"No, I have been very busy, but to-day I was in the neighborhood, and—you see I have been so very busy."

"Yes, I know that, but——"

"There were other reasons, I am obliged to confess."

"Were there? Was Miss Avery one of them?"

He looked surprised. "No, indeed! Who told you so?"

"No one. Isabel said once she wondered if you were interested in her."

"No; she had nothing to do with my reasons for keeping away. Barbara, did you want me to come?"

"You used to come quite often, you know, and grandfather was always glad to see you."

"Then it was entirely on your grandfather's account that you wanted to see me?"

"Yes—No." The last was in a whisper.

"What about Mr. Karl? Didn't you promise to find out something and tell me? Never mind; that can wait. I am not so interested to know. I will tell you the reason why I have not been to see you. It

was because I did not dare to, and the reason I came to-day was that I couldn't possibly stay away any longer. You don't know, little Barbara, what a fight I have had with myself, and how I have longed to see you. I know full well that I am much older than you, and I don't suppose, even if Mr. Karl were safely disposed of, that you would consider me for a moment, but—— Tell me, was there any need of my staying away? Shall I make you safe here now with Mrs. Dougherty, and leave you? Do I trouble you by what I am saying?"

"No, no. Please don't go."

"If I might have the right to stay by you always, Barbara."

"Yes, always. I want to tell you that——" But here Mrs. Dougherty appeared with a cup of steaming tea, and Barbara was made to drink every drop of it.

"The young lady will not go out again this night," said Mrs. Dougherty. "I haven't accommodations for you below, miss, but I can bring up a mattress an' make you comfortable here in a little room handy by. It ain't used, an' though it's not furnished, it is warrum, an' I've a dale of coovers I can spare, an' I can serve a supper, too, sorr, hot sausages an' pertaties."

Mr. Vandermeer smiled. "Assuredly, then, Miss Palmer would best stay. There is no getting any sort of conveyance this night, and the cars are not running. I am sure Miss Palmer will be quite safe with you, Mrs. Dougherty. See to the supper, please. And now I will go."

Mrs. Dougherty bustled off, but Barbara turned to him anxiously. "Oh, not in this storm?"

"Why, yes. I want to be satisfied that your grandfather is safe. Mr. Eaton does not live at any great distance, and I am not afraid of the snow, even if I don't like dust."

Barbara put out a detaining hand. "Please, that was what I wanted to tell you. I was so mistaken in you, and now I don't believe it was the dust at all that you minded, for I've heard of all of those good, kind things you have been doing. Miss Wilmer——"

"Ah, she has told on me?"

"Yes; but please tell me, why did you hide your true self behind that mask of indifference? What made you want me to think you were a selfish, ease-loving creature?"

"I think I was until an earnest little girl made me ashamed of myself. Since we are confessing, why did you flout me and give all your smiles to Mr. Karl?"

"I don't know. I was afraid—I didn't know——"

"What?"

"That it would make any difference to you, and I didn't know then that it made any difference to me."

"And now? Barbara—confound it! there comes Mrs. Dougherty with the sausages. She is a good, kind soul, and was employed by my mother for many years. Now her husband is janitor here, and so you see why I brought you to her: it was the nearest place I could think of. Yes, that looks very inviting, Mrs. Dougherty. Please set the tray down here. Good-by, Barbara."

"Good-by, Mr. Vandermeer."

"Ah, but he's the dear lad," said Mrs. Dougherty, as the door closed. "Niver wanst has he gone back on his wurrud, an' 'twas him got me husband the job here, an' the young gintleman what has these rooms is a fri'nd of his, an' he says to me, says he, 'Misther Vandermeer'll be a good fri'nd o' yours,' an' says I, 'He is that, an' niver a pore body that he'll not be-fri'nd, if he knows they're wantin' him. Shure,' says I. An' says he, 'Right you are, ma'am. I've knowed him boy an' man this fifteen year, an' he's that brave an' kind fur all the rings on his hands an' his aisy way o' speech.' An' plaze, miss, would yez care fur a b'ilet egg? I've a little hin o' me own that lays furninst the coal-bin in a bit av a box I've fur her."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Dougherty; this is very good. I shall be able to make a hearty supper."

"An' you've the purty color comin' back in yer cheeks again. I'll be gettin' me own supper now, an' come back for the dishes."

Barbara had scarcely more than finished her meal when Mr. Vandermeer returned with the information that Mr. Palmer had not thought of leaving Mr. Eaton's after the violence of the storm had made itself apparent, and that he sent his love to Barbara. "And," continued Mr. Vandermeer, smiling, "what is of great value to me, his blessing on us both."

Barbara blushed furiously. "Oh!" she exclaimed; "Mr. Vandermeer, what have you been saying to him?"

"What it was my duty to say, my dearest little girl: that I desired to marry his granddaughter, if she would have me, and I thought perhaps she would."

Barbara turned a half-reproachful glance upon him, but almost immediately her honesty asserted itself, and she said, very quietly, "I think she will." And just then Mrs. Dougherty again appeared, to bear off the dishes.

"Please take good care of this young lady," Mr. Vandermeer said, gravely. "This is the future Mrs. Henry Vandermeer, Mrs. Dougherty, and she is very precious."

Mrs. Dougherty raised her hands in delighted surprise, and swept Barbara a courtesy. "Hear to that!" she exclaimed. "May the two o' yez be as happy as if ye were in St. Peter's pocket!"

CHAPTER XII

TWO WEDDINGS

So curiously happy and so strangely placed was Barbara that night that she remained awake long after Mrs. Dougherty's stentorian breathing was heard from the next room, where she insisted upon establishing herself to guard her charge. But at last the girl fell asleep, to be awakened in the morning by the announcement that a note had arrived from Mr. Vandermeer, who was at a hotel near by, and, with Mr. Palmer, would call in an hour, and the three would then breakfast together.

"A most happy occasion," Mr. Palmer said, when he greeted Barbara. "My dear child, I am well pleased, although at first it was something of a shock to me to learn that you had reached a marriageable age. You seem very young, my dear."

"I am young," returned his granddaughter. "I don't want to leave you for some time yet, please, grandfather."

"Then you shall not, my child. When you are twenty-one we will talk of it."

Of all her friends, Barbara felt sure that Isabel would be the most pleased, yet she dreaded the meeting of Mr. Vandermeer's family; she was appalled at the thought that she would be Mrs. Bromley's sister-in-law and Isabel's aunt. In consequence she made no sign of what was most concerning her, determining to wait

till her friend should come to her. Isabel rushed in one day, almost overpowering her with kisses, reproaches, and expressions of delight.

"You dear, sly, little thing! I am so delighted. Of course I know. Uncle Henry looks too absurdly happy for us not to guess that something had happened, and we thought it was Miss Avery. No, I did not, but mamma did. I knew better, for I had been watching the young man, and I knew he had not been near her for months, but I did not dream—— Oh, Barbara, you ridiculous mite! The idea of your being my aunt! I could shake you for not telling me before."

"How could I when I did not know myself?"

"You could have come to see me as soon as you did know. It has been three whole days. Or you could have written."

Barbara looked confused. "I simply couldn't. There is your mother, you know."

"Oh, dear!" Isabel laughed merrily. "That is another ridiculous thing about it. To think of you as mamma's sister-in-law! But, Barbara, she is quite pleased. You know, even if you were not the dearest thing in the world, that the fact of your being ours would immediately invest you with all sorts of desirable qualities. Mamma has that happy faculty of believing that her own bread and butter must be better than that belonging to any one else. She is coming to see you right away, she wanted me to say, and she will have you to dinner at once."

Barbara gave a little groan, and Isabel laughed. "Of course, I know it will be martyrdom, you poor

dear; but it isn't as if we were strangers, and you know papa dotes on you. What does Aunt Thankful say?"

"She has yet to be heard from. I wrote to her yesterday."

"It is all so delightfully romantic. The idea of your being found in that snow-storm, although I know Uncle Henry started out to overtake you; but it was all very unconventional, wasn't it?"

"And, in consequence, appeals to you. Yes, it certainly was a situation out of the common, with Mrs. Dougherty appearing upon the scene with hot tea and sausages."

"You know Uncle Henry is not as rich as he was?"

"I know, and I am very glad. I should never have had the courage to marry a very rich man."

"You dear unworldly thing! Oh, Barbara, you will not be married before I am?"

"No, indeed; not for a year or more. To think of it, Isabel; we have deliberately turned our backs upon our chosen career."

"I haven't, and there will be no necessity for you to desert the fraternity. I mean to keep on. It will be delightful to go off sketching with Lawrie, and we'll find some picturesque nook where we can have a little summer home, and where we shall expect frequent visits from Mr. and Mrs. Henry Vandermeer."

"Don't, please; I am not used to it yet."

"When did you begin to care for that uncle of mine?"

"I hardly know. I think about the time we went to Miss Wilmer's, and she told us how good he had

been to her. Yet I missed him after he left us at Aunt Thankful's. One can't tell about such things."

"I can. I know the very minute I began to like Lawrence. It was when we met him in Salem. Barbara, did you know that Cora Marvin has married the young assistant after all? Poor man!"

Barbara laughed. "You were so jealous of her."

"Hush! don't remind me of that dreadful time now that it is all over. I am going to have Marian for one of my bridesmaids. Mamma insists upon there being at least four, besides you, dear Aunt Barbara, as my maid of honor."

"Dear Aunt Barbara, indeed! Don't you dare to call me that. It makes me feel a thousand years old."

"There comes mamma now; she said she would stop. Don't look so scared, sweeting; she is prepared to do you every honor."

And, indeed, this was true. Mrs. Bromley was really unaffectedly glad to welcome Barbara into the family. Her late reverses had shown her that some friendships were of slight quality, and she was beginning to accept Isabel's valuations as something better than her own. Aside from this, the fact that Miss Ray held position and property commended Barbara to Mrs. Bromley.

Easter week saw Isabel married, and to the wedding came the Gardners, the Adamses, Mr. Baird, besides hosts of the Bromleys' friends. But Aunt Thankful was not present; a short time before she started for Old Point, having promised herself the trip for a long time, she explained. Isabel was at first a little hurt at this seeming disaffection on the part of Miss Ray, but when Aunt Thankful offered her house to the newly

married couple, if they should elect to pass the honeymoon there, and sent them so quaint and curious a piece of old silver as a wedding-present, Isabel could no longer believe in Aunt Thankful's lack of interest and affection, and was satisfied to count her absence as a mere whim.

Madge Delorme, Marian Marvin, and two of Isabel's cousins were bridesmaids, and so attractive did Marian look in her dainty dress that Mr. Vandermeer assured Barbara that she need not feel distressed at having jilted Mr. Karl, since the young man seemed likely to be consoled. Perhaps Roger's hearty endorsement of Miss Marvin had something to do with her finding favor in Mr. Karl's eyes, for Roger sturdily maintained that she was the finest girl he had ever seen, not even excepting his own sister. "For, you see, Barby is a bit independent," he said, "and I don't think she would give up as easily as Miss Marian. I am inclined to think that Barby, quiet as she is, has staying qualities when she gets a notion in her head, and you see if a fellow were on the opposite side it might be 'pull Dick, pull devil.'" He confided this opinion to Mr. Karl in all innocence, and Mr. Karl, to whom the news of Barbara's engagement had come as something of a shock, pondered over Roger's words and unconsciously acted upon them, forgetting the truthful saying, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and among his own kin."

Obedience seemed to Mr. Karl a most desirable quality in a wife. He possessed rather rigid opinions upon the subject, and it is doubtful if Barbara would have accepted with a proper spirit the place which Mr. Karl

must have considered her rightful one. Marian Marvin was ready to adore, to serve, to pin absolute faith upon the object of her affections, and it was presumed would be very happy as Mrs. Karl.

Roger received his sister's announcement with, "That old fellow! Why, he's getting bald; and you don't want to marry your grandfather."

"Far be it from me to have such a desire," returned Barbara. "And Roger, my dear, when you are thirty-one or two you will think yourself a mere slip of a boy. I have discovered that hearts know no age. I wouldn't have Henry a day younger."

Roger threw back his head and laughed. "You are far gone," he said. "What do you think Aunt Thankful says?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"She says that a girl with your talent and with a possible career before her has no business to give it up for the uncertainty of a married life. 'I wouldn't do it,' she said."

But this was before Isabel's marriage. It was one day some weeks after that Aunt Thankful came to Barbara one afternoon. There were traces of tears in the usually bright eyes, and she said, in a broken voice, "Anthony Baird is dead, Barbara. Come home with me, child, I am very lonely. I have no children of my own to give me a hand when I go faltering down the years. You are right, Barbara: let love and home come first. You will go back with me, child?"

"Yes, of course, auntie dear."

"I think you will have to give Helen to me," said Miss Ray that evening. "There is no need for your

grandfather and the child to stay in New York when there is room here, and Helen loves the place."

Barbara struggled with herself for a moment. It was her dear desire that her home should be Helen's. Mr. Vandermeer had urged it, and they had made many plans for the little girl, which it would be hard to give up. But at sight of Aunt Thankful's tremulous hands and the wistful droop of her mouth, Barbara realized that the dear woman had suddenly begun to fail, and she said, "Very well, auntie, if grandfather consents it can be easily arranged. You know that Mr. Karl is talking of making a home out West, and insists upon his parents coming out to him. Grandfather has been troubled about the possible change, and I feel sure that he will be glad to accept your suggestion, but it must be on business grounds. He would not be happy otherwise."

"I understand that. Leave that part to us; all you have to do is to yield me Helen. You needn't fear that I'll not bring her up properly."

"I have no fears on that score."

"And I hope she'll not up and marry," said Aunt Thankful, brightening up a little.

"Now, Aunt Thankful, that is a very decided fling at me. Do you think I shall be making a mistake?"

"No, child, I do not; but I shall try to equip Helen so that, whatever her lot in life, she will not be without resources within herself. As I said before, let love and home come first; but if these fail a woman, let her not be left without interests to fill her life. I shall bring Helen up to speak the truth, to abhor debt, and

to do with a good will whatever work the Lord has designed for her."

"And you will do well. Hark! there is some one coming."

"It is Henry Vandermeer, of course; he might have let me have you for one evening to myself. But there, I will go up to my room. I have never yet failed to find something to occupy me."

"You shall stay right here," Barbara insisted. "Shall I sing you some of those old songs that you like so well?"

Aunt Thankful shaded her face with her hand. "No," she answered in a low tone, "not to-night."

Barbara went up to her and laid her soft cheek against the wrinkled one. "Auntie dear, I shall not leave you again till Helen comes to stay. You shall not be lonely any more," she said. Then Mr. Vandermeer entered, and at a whisper from Barbara he set himself to entertain Miss Ray, so that it was bedtime before any one realized it.

Barbara kept her word; throughout the long summer while Isabel was abroad and Roger was working away in the West where Mr. Karl was making ready a home for wife and parents, Aunt Thankful and Barbara discussed problems of housekeeping, and at Christmas time came Helen and Mr. Palmer to remain.

Isabel still found the fascinations of Paris too great for her to be willing to return, and it was not till spring that she was ready to settle down in New York. Then there was much consulting and planning for the apartment down by Washington Square. By his uncle's death Mr. Merrill was removed beyond financial wor-

ries, while Marian Marvin's legacy built a pretty house in the West, to which she went in April.

During this time Aunt Thankful clung very closely to Barbara. Mr. Vandermeer noticed it, and one day, when the two were driving home from the station, he said, "How should you like to live in that gray house yonder, little girl?"

"I should like it," said Barbara. "I used always to say that if I had to live in New York I'd like to live out of it."

"And your birthday is not on St. Patrick's Day?"

"No, fair sir, it is in June, as you well know."

"Let us return to the house."

"We are returning to it."

"Literal young woman, you know what I mean. I think of buying that mansion to which I called your attention. It is within walking distance of the station, and except on very dusty Sundays we could walk from there to Miss Ray's."

Barbara shook her head at him. "Bad boy!"

"Boy?"

"Yes, boy. Your Aunt Caroline calls you so, and I do not intend that she shall have all the privileges of the term. Well, boy, I think that is a delightful, perfectly delightful idea of yours. You cannot think how I dreaded a flat in New York, even with my good old Ike Kellar to help me out."

"I thought so. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I thought you wanted to be there."

"Not a bit of it. I like what you like."

"Do you mean your precious self?" At this moment Dolly stopped short, whether it was because of

the answer that Mr. Vandermeer made, or whether it was from sheer laziness, no one inquired. In a few moments she jogged on again, and before they reached home all the details regarding the purchase of the house had been discussed.

"We'll spend three months, from January till April, in town," Mr. Vandermeer said. "That part of the year is not an altogether alluring season in the country, and we'll want to see some pictures and hear concerts and operas without being frozen on our way to them."

"Yet they do have blizzards in New York city, if I remember correctly."

"Yes, thank goodness, they do. I shall always be grateful to the clerk of the weather for having arranged one at a propitious time. Here we are. Run in and ask Aunt Thankful if she will be willing to lend you a lemon or a flat-iron at any time, if we decide to become her neighbors."

Aunt Thankful was willing to lend or give anything, and, indeed, was so generous that Barbara had to protest when her modest little trousseau promised to be supplemented by such a store of linen and lace as could find no room in her trunk.

In the little church near by, the same to which Barbara had walked that memorable Sunday, she and Henry Vandermeer were married one June morning. Aunt Thankful stripped her rose-bushes to adorn the church and her own house, and the flowers which Barbara carried were no hot-house beauties, but were simple clusters of Baltimore Belles which Mr. Vandermeer gathered for her.

It was not till September that they were finally established in their own home, and one morning not long after Barbara appeared at Aunt Thankful's, her face dimpling with amusement. "I have come to borrow a lemon," she said. "Isabel and Mrs. Gardner and Madge Delorme are coming to lunch with me, and I am in a great hurry." Forthwith Aunt Thankful thrust upon her various dainties, so that she went home laden down. As she drove her snug little phaeton out of the gate there rose and fell upon the air the sonorous tones of the 'cello. Her grandfather was playing an obligato, that masterpiece of Mendelssohn's, "Be thou faithful unto death." Barbara looked back to see Helen contentedly watching a bee busy among the blossoms.

THE END.

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